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VOL. III.—SEE PAGE 209.

PERCY BLAKE;

OR,

THE YOUNG RIFLEMAN.

BY

CAPTAIN RAFTER,

AUTHOR OF "THE GUARDS," "OUR INDIAN ARMY," &c.

"There was an ancient sage philosopher,
Who had read Alexander Ross over;
And swore the world, as he could prove,
Was made of fighting and of love."—HUDIBRAS.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PERCY BLAKE.

CHAPTER I.

ALBANY BARRACKS.

After a tedious and most melancholy passage, we at length arrived at Portsmouth; when, having obtained three months' leave of absence, I endeavoured for some time to dissipate my sad reflections in the pleasures of the metropolis. These were indeed a treat, after two years' sharp service in the Peninsula: but, as they did not suffice for the accomplishment of my object, I paid a visit to my friends and relations in Tipperary; where the pleasures of the field, and the charms of unbounded hospitality, ba-

nished my *ennui*, and prepared me to encounter the vicissitudes of my subsequent career.

My father had died during my service in the Peninsula, and had left me a small estate; which, though not very productive, was a welcome addition to my pay. Having, however, little or no knowledge of country affairs, apart from the sports of the field, I placed it under the entire control and management of my brother, who had always been my warmest and most attached friend.

Amongst other near relatives, I went to see the widowed mother of my poor little cousin Honoria, whose hair bracelet still maintained its position on my wrist; and the good lady received me with tears of mingled joy and sorrow.

Honoria, she said, had wept and pined after me for many months; going about the house in the most disconsolate mood, wringing her hands, and exclaiming: "Oh, Percy Blake! Percy Blake! What shall I do for my cousin Percy?"

The child's health being at length affected, she had been sent for change of air and scene to an elder sister, who was married and

settled in the county Cork. There the Countess of Kingston, who had an estate in the neighbourhood, took such a fancy to Honoria that she begged to have her as a companion for her own children: with them she had been educated, and was now travelling with the Countess in England, and other foreign countries, as my worthy old relative expressed herself.

Having thus satisfied those yearnings for home and early ties which influence the hearts of all, however estranged by professional duties or foreign travel; I bade, as I then thought, a final adieu to my friends and relations, and proceeded, *viâ* Cork and Bristol, to the Army Depôt, to embark for my new regiment in India.

Most of my readers have doubtless heard of this once celebrated Army Depôt, at Albany Barracks in the Isle of Wight; where the recruiting companies of fifty or sixty regiments on foreign service were then collected, and where I once more found myself immersed in all the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war."

Albany Barracks consisted of several parallel ranges of wooden buildings, all on the ground

floor, or *rez de chaussée*, as our Gallic neighbours express it; occupying a fine healthy slope, about a mile and a half from the insular capital, Newport. These temporary structures have long been swept away, and replaced by waving fields of corn, more suited to our pacific times: but, at the period I am treating of, they were occupied by some thousands of sentient beings, full of life, animation, hope, and enterprise; whose bodies have gone to fatten many a foreign soil; or, worn out and mutilated, drag on a weary existence in the new world that has sprung up around them in their native land.

Being naturally of a gregarious and sociable disposition, as all military men necessarily must, or ought to be, I plunged at once "in medias res," as Horace says; and was voted a trump card by all the lovers, or promoters, of fun and frolic in "the Island," as sweet Vectis was called *par excellence*. It would be altogether vain in such a work as the present, to attempt anything like a description of our various modes of killing time at the Army Depôt: suffice it to say that dinners, balls, routs, assemblies, concerts, *déjeûners*, pic-nics, races, steeple-chases, billiards,

cricket, rouge et noir, and blind-hookee, succeeded each other with such incessant and untiring velocity, that no time was allowed for study, thought, or reflection; but all was a maddening whirl of "fast life," long before that term was invented to indicate the comparatively tame doings of the present day.

In the above *catalogue non raisonnée*, I have forgotten to mention courts-martial, duels, arrests, both civil and military, nocturnal fights with the mob of Newport, &c., &c.; but these were also pretty numerous and diversified, in adventure and result. In short, the variety of characters and incidents, which the daily occurrences at Albany Barracks brought upon the scene, would fill volumes, both amusing and instructive, of that railway literature so peculiarly the taste of the present day; but I can now only give a cursory glance at occurrences, which once were fraught with merriment, and scenes that delighted me in the buoyancy and freshness of youth—that *elixir vitæ* which spreads a never-failing banquet before the eyes of its happy possessor.

Our commandant was General M——; the same ingenious officer whose original method of

saving the colours of his regiment, has appeared in a former chapter. He was not, perhaps, the cleverest officer in the service; but, he was a worthy, good-tempered man, much beloved by all who were under his command.

One of the General's harmless hobbies was a fondness for lecturing the men of the different detachments, in a paternal tone, on their drunken and disorderly habits; assuring them that they would be excellent soldiers, were it not for their liquor-ish propensities.

"Recollect, my men," he would say, almost with tears in his eyes; "recollect I tell you, that liquor is the rock upon which you split!"

Riding down to Newport, one day, he encountered several soldiers, who had evidently been sacrificing to the jolly god. Some were laughing, singing, and jostling against each other; and some were making an echelon movement across the road, without much regard to time, step, or dressing.

Astounded at this monstrous state of affairs, the General rode up to the ring-leader of the jovial squad, who happened to be an Irishman; and demanded, in an angry tone, what he and his companions had been about.

Pat immediately came to a stand; and, raising his hand to his cap with military precision, replied, in a tone of becoming humility:

"Plaise your honor, we have been splitting on the rock!"

Music, both vocal and instrumental, was much cultivated at Albany Barracks; where we had a good amateur concert society, led by the Depot Paymaster, Knyvet, a member of a family at that time of much musical celebrity.

We had also a "lyrical club," whose members gave parties in turn at their respective quarters; on which occasions they were bound to contribute songs of their own composition to the general stock.

These military *noctes*, though not so famous as the *noctes ambrosianæ*, were productive of much fun and festivity; and the numerous original compositions contributed by the members, many of whom are now general officers in the service, would fill a very amusing volume. From these, I shall select one contributed by myself, and the introduction of which to

the club was marked by a serio-comic incident that afforded many a hearty laugh, when the fright which it occasioned was happily forgotten.

It being my turn to entertain the club, consisting of about thirty officers of all ranks, the prime spirits of the Depôt; we met at my lodgings in Newport, where we sat down to a comfortable supper; it being desirable to lay a solid foundation for such orgies as might be set forth in the night's programme.

Being bound for the "Golden Chersonese," I thought it would be characteristic to introduce mullikatauny and curry; which, with the ducks and green-peas, the beefsteaks, cutlets, pigeon pies, and all the other et ceteras of my bill of fare, were pronounced unexceptionable by very competent judges.

But greatly as they enjoyed these creature comforts, the eyes of all seemed irresistibly attracted from the good things before them to the contemplation of my side-board: not, however, by the splendour of my plate, with which at all times I have been very scantily furnished; but by the soldier-like appearance of two dozen

large, square-shouldered, Dutch-built bottles; drawn up in line by Terence O'Flinn, my new footman, with military precision, and admirably dressed from right to left.

These very attractive magnums were full to the stopper of most excellent "moonshine," our poetical name for Hollands; with which popular tipple "the Island" was then plentifully supplied by smugglers, whose proceedings courted more the "pale glimpses of the moon," than the "garish eye of day."

When the rage of hunger was repressed, as Homer has it, and Terence had divested the festal board of the fragments of the feast; he placed four of the magnums on the table, at equal distances, with the usual concomitants of hot and cold water, lemons, sugar, &c., and left us to our poetical enjoyments. There was, of course, wine for all who preferred it; but a vast majority chose the Schiedam, which was pronounced super-excellent.

After a few of our most popular lyrics had been sung by their respective composers, I was called upon for my contribution; which, with becoming modesty, I gave as follows:

THE ARMY DEPÔT.*

I.

I can't for my life tell the cause of this stuff,
About marching, and fasting, and fighting and glory;
We all have had fighting and fasting enough,
And shall flourish, no doubt, in the bright page of story.
In a snug barrack-room
We now banish gloom,
As by the fireside we belabour the foe;
Secure from a scar,
We encourage the war,
At Albany Barracks, the Army Depôt.

II.

Here we've music, and moonshine, and high-foaming bowls,
And cards, and tea-parties, and routs without number;
And balls, where the ladies show off, pretty souls!
While with gauze their fair bosoms they scorn to encumber.
Thus all débonaire,
We kick away care,
Each moment more social and happy we grow:
In your sleeve you may laugh,
When you get on the staff,
Of Albany Barracks, the Army Depôt.

* This song was written bythe late Captain William Rafter, of the 60th, or King's Royal Rifles.

III.

Sweet Vectis! of England the garden renown'd!
Tho' always luxuriant, thou never wert wild:
No man was a hermit where no woman frown'd,
No swain sighed in vain where the ladies all smil'd.
Thy daughters so fair,
So artless, so rare;
So neat, smart, and graceful, from top to the toe!
Good-natur'd and gay,
Drive old Care far away
From Albany Barracks, the Army Depôt.

IV.

Here, cheerful and social, where no one offends,
Each thought, word, and act will submit to reflection;
Round Pleasure's gay banner we rally like friends,
Drawn close by the bands of esteem and affection.
And our good Commandant
Every favour will grant,
To make this fine current in harmony flow:
Polite, mild, and kind,
He rules o'er the mind,
At Albany Barracks, the Army Depôt.

V

Whenever by duty's imperious decree,
I'm forced to relinquish this charming communion,
My body may rove, but my heart no more free,
I will leave as a hostage of future reunion.

From the garden when driven,
I'll look back on Heaven,
Like grandfather Adam, reluctant to go;
And part, with a tear,
From the circle so dear,
At Albany Barracks, the Army Depôt!

Three distinct rounds of applause repaid my willing labours, and compliments innumerable were showered on my blushing muse. My health was toasted in bumpers of Scheidam; and the President declared I was the most promising recruit that had yet joined the "Albang Lyrical Club."

In short, my gratification was unbounded; and I began already to feel those incipient yearnings for poetic fame, which so often lead young scribblers into the swamps and quagmires that surround the base of Parnassus, when a gentle knock was heard at the door of the drawing-room, where we held our symposium.

"Come in!" I cried, thinking it was my landlady's servant, with some complimentary message from her mistress; who must have everheard our minstrelsy, and had, doubtless, the good taste to appreciate my superior effusion.

But the door opened and admitted two men, utter strangers to me, and who might certainly be classed as very queer-looking fellows. They approached my chair without ceremony, and one of them addressed me as follows:

"Mayhap you don't know me, Muster Blake; but my name is Jeremiah Snap, and I'm a hofficer of excise, Sir."

"Well," I boldly exclaimed, though rather startled at the announcement, "what have you to do with me, my good fellow?"

"Not much for the present time, Sir," replied Mr. Snap, with a sardonic grin, "but I'm hobbligated to seize them there bottles of Skydam; and 'tain't onlikely as how the commissioners may require you to account for having um in your possession."

"What d—d impertinence is this?" I exclaimed, starting up in a very blustering mood. "How dare you, Sir, come into my house without my permission?"

"You bid me come in," said Mr. Snap, with a wink at his respectable companion, "didn't he, Jim?"

"I'll take my bible hoath of it!" said Jim.

"I'll not stand this nonsense, by heavens!" I

exclaimed, "quit the room instantly, or I'll kick you down stairs."

"Pitch the rascals out of the window!" cried two or three young members of the club; and up they jumped, very well inclined to put their threat into execution.

"I say, Jim," bellowed Mr. Snap, "you jest run off for the po-lice: you'll find 'em round the corner at Snags's; and I'll stay to see that these here coves don't make away with them there bottles."

"Stop, stop!" cried our president, in a voice of authority; "let us have no violence in this matter. There is no occasion whatever for the police. I know Mr. Snap very well, and I'm quite sure he's a gentleman."

"Thank you, Colonel," said Mr. Jeremiah, "I knows you too, Sir, and I'm sure you'll give these young gen'lemen good adwice, Sir."

"Yes, yes," said the president, "all shall be settled amicably. The fact is, Mr. Snap, that there is, as you say, a small matter of 'moonshine' here, but only just enough for this evening's drinking, and I pledge my word there won't be a vestige of it in the morning. Now, come; we are all men of honour, and not a

soul amongst us will blab; here are two guineas —good night to you, and say no more about it,

"Unpossible, Sir!" exclaimed Jeremiah, throwing himself into an attitude of virtuous indignation, as his eye glanced from the two guineas, to the four-and-twenty bottles all in a row.

"Well! but consider," said the colonel.

"Quite unpossible, Sir," persisted Jeremiah. "Never did sich a thing in all my life; did I ever, Jim?"

"Never, on my bible hoath," replied Jim."

The incorruptible virtue of the excise officer threw us all into a quandarry: not for the loss of the schiedam, which was a trifle, as I had wine, brandy, and whiskey, in abundance, for the night's consumption; but whispers now began to circulate, of the expense and trouble of custom-house prosecutions, as well as the absolute jeopardy in which our commissions might be placed, if matters were pushed to extremities against us. It was said that smuggling had recently been carried to so daring a pitch in the island, owing to the extraordinary

demand for 'gin, amongst the troops, that the commissioners were determined to make a striking example, the very first opportunity that offered; and, as Old Nick would have it, there could not be a better one than the present.

Taken, as we were, in *flagranti delicto*, with those damnable Dutch bottles staring us in the face; paraded with such brainless vanity, by Mr. Terence O'Flinn, on whom we vented "curses not loud, but deep," we had no other resource than bribery to relieve us from our dilemma. The dogged Mr. Snap, however, was so outrageously true to his trust, as to refuse all our offers, though we trebled and quadrupled the original figure; and, with a stern virtue that would have done honour to an old Roman, he insisted on carrying off his prize. This, indeed, we could now no otherwise prevent, than by having recourse to violence; and thus making the matter a thousand times worse.

With heavy hearts, therefore, we saw the virtuous Jeremiah, and his conscientious myrmidon, make preparations to transfer our four and twenty bottles of exquisite Hollands from our supper-room to the custom-house. Never did the "Albany Lyrical Club," suffer such a

heavy blow, and great discouragement. In blank stupidity, we looked at one another; the most eloquent amongst us as mute as stock-fish, in fearful anticipation of arrests, courts-martial, and custom-house prosecutions, in *secula seculorum.*

But what vexed me more bitterly than all the rest, was to see the cause of our calamity—the military puppy, Mr. Terence O'Flinn, who had so ostentatiously exposed his whole line to the fire of the enemy; instead of exerting his wit to counteract that enemy, actually assisting him to complete his conquest. For instance, Mr. Snap, being puzzled how to carry off his seizure all at once, not deeming it advisable to make several trips for that purpose, the rascal Terence solved the difficulty in a trice, by saying—

"Sure, there's a fine large clothes'-basket down stairs, that will carry 'em all at wanst for you, Mr. Snap."

"Thank you, my good fellow," said Jeremiah; "do bring it up, and I'll give you something for your trouble?"

Terence ran down, and soon re-appeared with the basket; but, not satisfied with this audacious piece of treachery, he actually assisted in packing

up the bottles, as if he was doing the most praiseworthy action in the world.

"That's the scoundrel that betrayed you," said one of the young fellows near me.

"Not a doubt of it," I replied; "but I'll pay him out for it, before long."

"Now then, Jim," said Mr. Snap, when all the bottles were stowed away, "take the basket on your shoulder, carefully, and we'll wish the genlemen good night."

This was said with an affectation of civility; and a leer of vulgar triumph that drove me distracted.

The basket was accordingly placed upon Jim's shoulder, with the assistance of my rascal Terence; who was so cursedly officious, that I could have knocked his head and the wall together.

"Take care av yourself, my man," said Terence, "and mind how you go down: the stairs is dark, and some of the steps is slippery."

"Yes, yes," replied Jim; "I knows what I'm about. This here ain't the first time we've done the swells out of their Skydam."

"Stand away from below!" shouted Terence.

"Sure, af the honest man was to slip, he'd dhrown ye all in blue blazes!"

"Thank you, my worthy fellow," said Mr. Snap: "I'll recollect your civility, and if you call on me next week, you shall have a drop of beer for it."

Terence was duly grateful for this exuberant generosity on the part of Jeremiah; and the latter, turning to us, exclaimed, with a smile of insolent triumph:—

"I wish you all a good evening, genlemen, and hopes you'll excuse——Oh criki! what the devil is that?"

A deafening peal of laughter succeeded the horrible crash which had caused Mr. Jeremiah's exclamation; for, Terence, watching his opportunity, had given the basket a tip, and down it went to the bottom. The four-and-twenty square-shouldered bottles were smashed in a thousand fragments, on the stone floor of the passage; and before ten minutes had elapsed, not a thimbleful of their contents could be saved as evidence of our smuggling propensities.

The crest-fallen Jeremiah sneaked off like a dog that has stolen a bone, and expects to be

well kicked for it; and we entered into a subscription on the spot, to present Mr. Terence O'Flinn with a silver watch, for his ingenuity and presence of mind.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE IN AN INDIAMAN.

THE order for embarkation at length appeared; and I made preparations accordingly for the gorgeous East: laying in a stock of seven or eight dozen shirts, with all other articles of wearing apparel in proportion, to the great astounding of my servant; who seriously asked me if officers kept shop when they went over there to India, to sell shirts, trousers, and all other hardware.

As the spring fleet of the Bombay and China ships then lay at Spithead, I embarked from Ryde, with a detachment of fifty men; and soon found myself on board the 'Cumberland'—a fine vessel of 1500 tons burthen, mounting thirty-six guns; with a miscellaneous crew of

a hundred and fifty men, including a good many Chinese and Hindoo Lascars. I was received with every civility and attention by the second officer, who commanded *pro tem.*, and speedily installed in a fine, capacious cabin, which I shared with a cornet of the 17th Light Dragoons.

Our fleet consisted of five large Indiamen, under convoy of the 'Seringapatam' frigate; and as Blue Peter was flying at the foretop of the latter, everything was in a state of bustle and preparation for a long passage. The decks were constantly crowded with soldiers and soldiers' wives, and passengers with their servants and luggage; intermingled with sea-stock, which comprised a couple of cows, with numerous sheep, pigs, geese, turkeys, ducks, &c., &c., the whole contributing their utmost efforts to the general noise and confusion that prevailed in this modern Ark of all created things.

Two or three days, however, sufficed to shake every one down into their proper places; and the Commodore, having loosed his foretopsail, and fired a gun, the capstan was manned, the drums and fifes mustered on the forecastle; and, amidst the inspiring strains of the "Girl I left behind

me," the men gave way on the bars, with their joyous circular tramp, till the slack of the cable was hove in. Then the chief mate, or first officer, as he is styled, who was pacing backwards and forwards on the poop, shouted through his speaking trumpet:—

"Belay all that! Mr. Ripley, man the whip there."

"Ay, ay, Sir," replied Mr. Ripley, second officer, who commanded in the waist, and who issued the necessary orders to his subordinates.

The men appointed for this particular duty, having overhauled the rigging of the whip; that comfortable mode of ascent, manufactured out of a rum puncheon, and decorated with several of the ship's flags, was immediately lowered into the captain's launch, which had just come alongside.

We all sprang to the hammock-nettings, to see what Providence had sent us in a female form worth looking at: for as yet we had seen nothing in the shape of a lady passenger, but a couple of officer's wives; rather *passées*, but otherwise chatty and agreeable enough. When I say that we had a passage of three or four months before us, the reader will readily under-

stand how anxiously we looked forward to some *compagnons de voyage*, of that sex and age which alone can dissipate the dulness of time, and gild even monotony itself with unwonted splendor.

Captain Wilkinson, a very gentlemanly, nice fellow, by the way; having ascended the ship's side, stood ready to receive two ladies who had come with him. The first of these was the wife of Colonel Oddy, of the Company's service; a pleasant, good-natured, lady-like person, who smiled around upon all, as if to give assurance of continued fair weather from that quarter, at least: but how shall I describe the second; a young lady, who was making her first trip to India, under Mrs. Oddy's protection.

Picture to yourself, gentle reader, a blonde, of the purest and most delicate tint; with a profusion of light auburn ringlets, and eyes of melting blue, the certain indications of a tender and affectionate heart: an elegant figure, somewhat inclined to *embonpoint;* a graceful step and carriage, and a charming affability, which won the involuntary love of all. Picture this to yourself, and you will have something like a semblance of Julia Monson.

Every one who could get a look at this fair vision as she passed on to the poop cabins, seemed pleasingly struck with her appearance: for my part, I was fascinated, entranced, rapt in a soft Elysium of admiration and delight. I know not how it is, but love seems to be the natural foundation of my character; for, though I have had a fair share of fighting, I cannot say that I ever felt so much pleasure in the latter as in the former: or, perhaps, I should rather say that the fierce excitement of the one, never yielded me the exquisite enjoyment of the other.

However this may be, as I am no splitter of metaphysical hairs, or profound searcher into the mysterious idiosyncracy of the human heart; it will be sufficient to say, that even this slight and single glance of Julia Monson sealed my destiny for ever, as I then imagined. But, though I shall possibly suffer in the opinion of my fair readers, for the facility with which I appear to have transferred my affections from one to another, they must do me the justice to admit, that I never made choice of a new love, until the old one was irrevocably lost to me, by some stern decree of fate; which seemed determined that I should never be fixed to any one

in particular, but to veer eternally to every point of the female compass.

Some sensualists there are who excuse their versatility, by the distich of the poet, that

"When we are far from the lips that we love,
We have but to make love to the lips we are near."

I am, however, by no means such a materialist, as to be influenced by this heretical doctrine. On the contrary, so far from wishing to cast off the chains I have proudly worn for my early loves, I still cherish their memories with the most lively affection; and fancy that, in every fresh phase of my amorous existence, I but make a renewal of my affection to the same angelic being, in a new and somewhat different form, that first inspired me with the tender passion.

But the anchor's a-peak, and we are off down channel. Sweet Vectis is melting in the distance, and Boreas is blustering in our rigging; while, ever and anon, he takes the ruffian billows by their foamy tops, and dashes them along our reeking decks, in showers of spray, that send the fresh-water sailors dripping to their cabins. I, more accustomed to the

rude element, with forage-cap strapped under my chin, and Spanish *capa* wrapped in many folds around me, pace the quarter-deck, backwards and forwards, with the officer of the watch; spinning yarn for yarn with the sea-going monster, and peering curiously into the cuddy windows; not, by any means, so much attracted by the savoury preparations therein going forward, as by a longing hope to catch a glimpse of this new star of my destiny.

But Julia, lovely, inexorable maid! was invisible; and I was obliged to submit to the succedaneum of an excellent dinner, which was now announced by drum and fife, in the good old fashion.

Our table extended the whole width of the cuddy, that is of the ship's beam; all but the space allotted to a couple of eighteen-pounders on each side, their muzzles being presented to the lowering sea and sky, and their breeches to the company. The latter was by no means so numerous as I expected; for several of the passengers, and most of the young "soldier officers," writers, and cadets were *hors de combat;* while we, who were callous to nautical calamities, were left to the enjoyment of a

banquet more than sufficient for thrice our number.

At the head of the table sat the captain, with his pleasant smiling countenance; and at the bottom, old Cole, the chief mate, or first officer; with his little cunning bead-like eyes, looking out for a fresh victim at chicken-hazard. Both did the honors with much urbanity to their new guests; though a heavy lurch would now and then upset a tureen of pea-soup, or send an avalanche of knives, forks, and shattered crystal into the lap of some luckless Griffin.

It came on to blow great guns as we got into the chops of the channel; and matters were not much improved when we found ourselves amidst the mountain billows of the Bay of Biscay. A dreary silence, meanwhile pervaded the poop cabins, whose inmates seemed to have given up the ghost altogether: indeed I began at last to fancy that no such person as Julia Monson really existed; but that my eyes must have been deceived by some bodiless creation of a distempered brain; or else that some flitting sea nymph had been amusing an idle moment at my expense.

I had nothing for it, therefore, but to plunge,

as a *pis-aller*, into those gastronomic enjoyments which seem, indeed, to be the sole blessings of a long voyage; *per esempio*, at 8 o'clock, a.m., we had an excellent breakfast of pork chops, mutton chops, ham and eggs, fried fish, hot rolls, tea, coffee, chocolate, &c. At twelve, we had biscuit, Stilton, Parmesan, pale ale and Madeira: at two, an elegant and abundant dinner, with so many shore luxuries that no one could fancy we were in the midst of the Atlantic. At six o'clock, tea was served, with many of the breakfast accompaniments; and at nine, a capital supper of cold meat, broiled bones, devilled turkeys, roasted potatoes, malt, grog, punch, &c. Sancho himself never had greater reason to be satisfied with the wedding of Camacho; for the cuddy table was, in short, one continuous scene of eating and drinking, one meal being no sooner despatched than preparations were made for another.

Julia, however, the sun of my existence, had not yet illuminated our horizon: for the weather was still rough, and the ship rolled and plunged heavily, keeping our decks in a constant deluge of spray; while our view was bounded by vapoury clouds, through which our other ships looked like spectral edifices of ropes, and spars, showing their

very keels occasionally on the crest of a mountain wave, as if on the very point of toppling over.

Even I, though I always loved the battling of the elements, would often weary of the sameness, and retire to my cabin, which rarely had occasion for dead-lights, while others were involved in darkness. There, while my young companion of the 17th amused himself with hook and line, catching mackarel, noddies, Mother Cary's chickens, and other aquatic birds and fish that followed in the wake of the ship, I endeavoured to give expression to my thoughts and feelings through the medium of my flute; and once or twice I was gratified by something like a responsive strain overhead, a light and graceful touch on the piano, accompanied by a voice of simple pathos and natural melody. Oh Julia!

We at length got into the latitude of the Western Islands, and the St. Michael's boats came off with fruit, fish, and other insular luxuries; while, the weather being warm and moderate, our lady-birds began to show upon the quarter-deck. Then, indeed, I had my fill of love; for, though Julia was the cynosure of all eyes, and the magnet that attracted every heart, yet my attentions were so incessant, my

assiduities so marked, that, before we reached Madeira, my position was pretty well defined as the favoured beau of the lovely passenger.

One great advantage I had over my rivals was music, of which Julia was passionately fond: and as she played and sang with taste and expression, the accompaniment of my flute was always welcome of an evening, when the ship was going steadily with a gentle breeze abaft the beam; while the very air of those balmy latitudes was redolent of all-pervading love.

At Madeira, as the ships lay-to for a whole day, to take on board the usual stock of wine for India, and the London market, Mrs. Oddy availed herself of the opportunity to make a little party for shore, and I had the good fortune to be included in it: for, though Mrs. Oddy knew perfectly well that I should be outbidden in the Indian market, yet she had a tender bosom, that felt for the yearnings of young hearts like ours. We spent a delightful day at Funchal, and its lovely vicinity; where, having visited several sequestered retreats of nuns and friars, from whom we purchased a variety of nick-nacks, pretty souvenirs, of no intrinsic value, we returned on board in the

evening. The vessels then filled their sails, and we stood our course, due south, and by east, easterly; the African coast, as the reader knows, trending away in that direction.

Our little excursion ashore had afforded me many opportunities of evincing the warmth of my affection for Julia; and of receiving from her a sweet encouragement of my suit. We soon became inseparable; and getting into the trade-winds, when the ships went almost motionless before the breeze, and for weeks together had no occasion to stir tack, or sheet, we spent the long pleasant day on the deck together: walking, chatting, or reading, beneath an ample awning; while the evening closed in with music and dancing. On these occasions, I sang *Seguidillas* for Julia, which she accompanied very prettily on the guitar; and I danced the Bolero and Fandango for her with the castanets;—sometimes burlesquing those picturesque dances to a degree that made her laugh till she cried. Thus, every day added to the freedom of our intercourse, and the fervency of our love, as we proceeded on our voyage, laughing, singing, and dancing: the captain pleasant and good-humoured, as usual; the ship's

officers obliging and attentive, the passengers becoming more amiable every day, the more nearly we approached the termination of our voyage; and old Cole, the chief-mate, pigeoning the young writers and cadets, as usual, in his cabin at chicken-hazard.

But we met, of course, with the usual casualties incidental to long voyages. For instance, our main-top was struck with lightning one day, and blazed out with alarming fury; on another we were deluged by the bursting of a water-spout, which set us all floating in our cabins. Then, we had several dreadful gales of wind, which put a stop to cooking for days together; and as many still more dreadful calms: being forced to take shelter from the one, in Simon's Bay, and patiently to endure the other, like "the Ancient Mariner." Finally, when in the latitude of Bourbon, and the Isle of France, we had to clear twice for action: but, on both occasions, the French cruisers, which had caused the alarm, kept a respectful distance; and showed each a fair pair of heels when our gallant frigate bore down upon them, under a towering cloud of canvass, gracefully skimming the surface of the subject main.

CHAPTER III.

LONG CROKER OF OURS.

At length, after a favourable passage of three months and twenty days, we came in sight of the celebrated dowry of the Infanta, Donna Caterina, the far-famed island of Bombay; and as we approached the picturesque shores of the beautiful inlet from which it derives its name, sailing by the hanging woods and cavern-temples of Elephanta, and skirting the lofty mountains of the Mahratta shore, we hailed with delight this first appearance of the gorgeous East, and revelled in fancied joys and golden anticipations.

It was barely six o'clock A. M. when we neared the shore, but all was life and bustle. The

placid bosom of the bay was crowded with vessels of every description, from the lofty Indiaman down to the lumbering patamar, and the unsophisticated fishing boat; while the somewhat turbid water, which succeeded the deep blue of the ocean, seemed alive with large snakes winding lazily about as if basking in the sunshine. This imparted a character to the scenery more novel than attractive: but when the native boats came alongside, and we were boarded in every direction by crowds of dubashes, maty-boys, durgees, doby-wallas, *et hoc genus omne*, all eagerly seeking employment, and soliciting "master's" patronage; we felt ourselves indeed in a new world, that received us with open arms, winning smiles, and a profusion of luxuries; altogether unlike the cold and churlish indifference we had been accustomed to in our own phlegmatic regions.

Every preparation being made for immediate landing, our *parti de voyage* now bade each other a friendly adieu, and Julia and I separated with fervent vows of everlasting affection. The 17th Light Dragoons being somewhere in the Guzerat, the officers and men of that regiment on board were to take up their quarters for the

present in the fort: the cadets were all taken charge of by the serjeant-major of the Company's European regiment; the young writers, and other passengers, had generally some confidential peon, or servant of their friends on shore, to marshal them the way; while a quarter-master sergeant of my regiment soon found me out, and gave me the unpleasing intelligence that the battalion, having been at the capture of the Isle of France, had sailed thence to Madras, and was soon after included in the expedition to Java, under Sir Samuel Auchmuty. There was now, he said, nothing but a detachment of invalids, with all the women of the regiment, left at Bombay, under the charge of a major and one subaltern.

The sergeant's intelligence was a considerable damper to my anticipated enjoyment: but I lost no time in getting my men into the boats provided for them, and soon arrived at the bunder, or pier head. There we had to bustle through bales of merchandize, piles of teakwood, palanquins, hackeries, elephants, camels, and various other impediments, peculiar to a place of such extensive commerce; while

crowds of Parsees, Arabs, Hindoos, Chinese, &c., stunned our ears with their multifarious jargons. Under the guidance of our sergeant, however, we at length got clear of all these obstacles; and proceeded without further interruption towards our destination.

This was Colabah, or Old Woman's Island, the southern extremity of what may now be called the peninsula of Bombay; a level piece of arid rock and sandy soil, which is itself, insulated at high water; and where some regiments and detachments were cantoned in very unsophisticated barracks, built of cocoa-nut trees and bamboos, and roofed with *cadjans*, a species of rude matting made of the leaves of the former. After an hour's march, nearly, we arrived at our cantonment; where, having delivered over my detachment to the sergeant-major, I said to my conductor:—

"Well, Sergeant Jamieson, what is become of your officers? I have not seen one of them yet."

"Weel Sir," replied Jamieson, "the major, ye ken, has just stepped over to Elephanta with a party, to see the caves, not expecting the ships would come in the day; but the leeftenant is not far awa."

"Then shew me to his quarters," I said, "for I am confoundedly peckish, and shall be glad of a good breakfast."

"Hech, Sir," cried Jamieson, with a smile, "ye'll be jest in time then for a bonny griskin."

"A what?" I demanded.

But the sergeant stept out, and replied not; I could see, however, by his manner that there was some mystery in the case.

In two or three minutes we arrived at the *compound* of Lieutenant Croker; a somewhat elevated piece of rocky soil, overlooking the sea, and crowned with a few straggling cocoa-nut trees, the infinitesimal roots of which seemed scarcely connected with the arid bed from which they sprang. The *compound* was surrounded by a low hedge of milk-bush, which seemed rather destined to define its limits, than to defend it from the incursions of sundry pigs, pariah-dogs, and naked black children of both sexes; who ran backwards and forwards through its numerous gaps; shouting, grunting, barking, and tumbling over each other, with the most amusing hilarity and good fellowship.

In the centre of this Indian estate stood

the lieutenant's bungalow, a square building of the most unpretending simplicity: its walls being formed of four sturdy cocoa-nut trees at the angles, which were connected by diagonal bamboos; and these were covered with *cadjans*, impervious to the sun, at least, if not to the wind and rain. The roof was formed in a similar manner, and the front of the building was decorated with an equally light and graceful verandah; while the floor was formed of *chunam*, an excellent cement made of burnt sea-shells; and which, when properly wrought, bears a polish like Parian marble.

In spite of its rude architecture and rough materials, there was an air of lightness, coolness, and comfort about this bungalow that struck me forcibly; but what still more attracted my observation was a dead pig that lay on a table, in front of the building. It had evidently just been killed; the hair was scalded off, the stomach opened and cleaned, and sundry incisions made, *secundum artem*, in the body, by a very tall, gaunt young man; who, with his shirt-sleeves tucked up to his shoulder, stood by the table, brandishing a huge butcher's knife, which he alternately sharpened on his

steel and buried in the body of the pig; not only with a perfect knowledge of, but an excessive enjoyment in, all the mysteries of the slaughtering art.

"If you please, Leeftenant Croker," said my conductor, "here is Leeftenant Blake just arrived from England."

"Oh, Jupiter!" exclaimed the amateur butcher, making a rush at me, as if about to slaughter me also; "I am happy to see you, Percy Blake:" here he shock me tremendously by the hand. "I have heard of you from Jack Dillon," he continued. "I know you of old—blown up at Rodrigo—capital shot, eh!—duck-gun, or rifle—single, or double—but I'll show you the sport, my boy!—I'll show you a jungle that will astonish your weak nerves, and make you wish yourself up to your neck in your father's horse-pond."

Thus he ran on, shaking me heartily by the hand all the time, as if really glad to see me; and occasionally interrupting himself with such exclamations as these:

"I say, you Chouree Mootoo, wallop them pigs out of the *compound*, and tell Gungee and

Paupee, if they don't keep their brats at home, I'll cut 'em up like pork By Jupiter! there's Juno running off with the pig's croobeens! Knock her down with the mallet, Rungapa!—you thief of the world, you have missed the dog, and killed one of the children!—Oh, Jupiter! what a shinty we'll have, when Gungy hears you've squashed her brat—there, gather him up, and throw him over the milk-hedge, or we'll have a Court of Inquiry, and all the rest of the balderdash, for manslaughtering a little black bastard!"

Sergeant Jamieson here dropt a hint that I had not yet breakfasted.

"I'm glad to hear it," replied this original. "I'll give him a griskin that's better than curry, pillau, and all the rest of the balderdash. Oh! you havn't been to head-quarters yet? You havn't seen Purseram Bhow?"

"Who is Purseram Bhow?" I asked.

"Oh, by Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "You don't know who Purseram Bhow is! You'll soon know enough of him, my boy; won't he, Jamieson?"

"Aweel, Sir," replied the cautious Scot, "I think it vara likely he may."

"Come along, then," said Croker; "breakfast will be ready in a jiffy. Chouree Mootoo, is the table laid?"

"Ho, Sahib," replied Chouree Mootoo.

"Clap us down a couple of nice griskins," said Croker. "I'll come and give them a touch of Cayenne, when they're beginning to brown.—You Rungapa—"

"Master please?" said the maty-boy.

"Go," said Croker, "and sweep out all the snakes, scorpions, and centipedes; and get a couple of chillums ready for after breakfast."

"Ho, Sahib," said the maty-boy, as he scampered off to obey orders.

"Joe Ingram," said Croker, to a military assistant in the slaughtering department, "take that pig's head to the major; and a nice loin to the quarter-master's lady, and a hind-quarter to Mrs. Paymaster, with my salaam; we'll corn the rest. And, Ingram, you may tell the sergeant-major I have excused you from knapsack drill for the next fortnight—"

"He says I must make up my guards, Sir," interrupted Ingram, "for them two nights I was out in the jungle with your honor."

"That's more of the balderdash," replied

Croker. "'Tis Purseram Bhow put that in his head, because he doesn't like me to be absent from quarters: but tell him he must always return you on fatigue when you're with me. Tell the quarter-master sergeant to give you a bottle of rum on my account; and now for breakfast, Percy my boy—Rungapa let out the dogs—Choreday, choreday!"*

Then forth rushed a dozen dogs of all breeds and sizes, from an out-house where the noisy pack had hitherto been confined; and up they jumped upon Croker and me with devouring fondness and delight. Polygar, lurcher, retriever, pointer, spaniel, terrier, and bull-dog: frisking, barking, yelping, and coursing each other, in and out of the bungalow, and round the compound, like so many mad things; and thus accompanied we entered the *salle-à-manger* of my new friend.

The maty-boy had just swept out the snakes, scorpions, and centipedes: but I still thought I could detect a few crawling about here and there; while an occasional rustling in the roof over-head, for the room had no ceiling, and a sparkling eye peeping out between the cadjans,

* "Let go! let go!"

indicated the presence of a lurking snake or two. The breakfast, however, was excellent; for, besides the promised griskin, we had a capital prawn curry, and some of those dear little gelatinous fish called Dungaree ducks. Our real China tea, and our Mocha coffee, were sweetened with sugar-candy, an improvement certainly on our European loaf-sugar; and nothing could be more exquisite, if a large, green, flying bug did not occasionally flounce into the tea-cup, and render it undrinkable.

"You Rungapa," said Croker to his maty-boy: "take a pellet bow, and shoot those rascals."

"Ho, Sahib," replied Rungapa, taking down one of the bows from the wall, against which several were hanging; and, as he adjusted a clay pellet to the string, I looked round, to see if any more "little black bastards" were doomed to death; when, swoop! through one of the windows rushed a crow, seized a fine, thick slice of bread-and-butter which I held in my hand, and flew out of the door like a flash of lightning.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Croker, "that fellow would know a griffin a mile off."

The sable felon, however, had not flown so fast, but that a pellet from Rungapa's bow struck him right under the wing; knocked a shower of feathers from his body, and the bread-and-butter from his bill; which was caught, ere it touched the earth, by another of the fraternity, who bore off the prize in triumph.

When we had discussed enough of the solids and fluids, a couple of hookahs were set down on neat Persian carpets behind us; and the silver mouth-piece of the long tube being gently insinuated into my right hand by Chouree Mootoo, who, in addition to his many other employments, was hookah-burdar for the nonce, I then, for the first time, enjoyed the luxury of a chillum; so superior in every respect to our barbarous European methods of inhaling the fragrance of the meditative leaf.

"Oh, Jupiter!" my host suddenly exclaimed, "here is Tom Tchute. Come on you limping rascal and shave me."

Here entered a little elderly native, who not only limped, but squinted awfully; looking, as Croker remarked, a dozen ways to cheat the devil. He was attired in the ordinary Hindoo costume, all perfectly white and clean; with

large gold ear-rings, several silver rings on his toes, and a huge roll of white muslin round his waist; in which were stuck sundry razors, hones, and razor strops, the implements of his calling. He entered with a quick jerking motion, stropping a razor all the while, as if anxious to make the most of his time; and his little sparkling eyes shot rapid glances across his nose, as if in eager search of some object he either couldn't find, or couldn't shun. Croker said the latter was the case; for that his contract with Old Nick had nearly expired, and he was now looking out for a bolt.

Tom, who was surnamed Tchute, from a peculiar branch of his trade, lathered and shaved my friend Croker in a very masterly and artistic manner; replying in monosyllables, or short caustic phrases, to all the taunts and questions of his equally original employer. He also performed a similar operation on my chin, and when he had finished, Croker said:

"You had better shampoo him, Tom."

"Spose master like," replied Tom.

"What is shampooing?" I asked.

"The most delightful operation you can imagine," replied Croker. "Isn't it, Tom?"

"Some like, some not like," said Tom. "Young Griffin, Sahib not know what good for him."

"Well," I said, "proceed with your operation, I am ready."

Tom then began to knead the upper part of my body gently with his knuckles, as if he had so much dough under his plastic hands; this he would every now and then accompany with a smart slap on some muscular part, pressing and slightly pinching the flesh; his fingers still in rapid and perpetual motion, flying from one place to another; imparting, not a tickling, but a tingling sensation to nerves and fibres that was far from unpleasant, and producing a sleepy tendency, which he would suddenly dispel, by an unexpected cracking of all my knuckles. Then he would resume the kneading process; occasionally pulling me by the ears, and rubbing with his smooth, soft hand, the muscles of the neck and shoulders, till he found I was again subsiding into a dozy state; when he gave my head such a sudden jerk, that I thought he had actually caused a dislocation of the vertebræ.

"You infernal villain!" I exclaimed, starting up. "You have broke my neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Croker. "By Jupiter, that's beautiful."

"Spose master lie down a bit," said Tom very coolly, "him neck mend again."

I felt, indeed, an uncommon propensity for sleep at the moment; and, throwing myself on Croker's cane-bottomed couch, I fell into a delicious slumber, which lasted till tiffin time, when I awoke wonderfully refreshed from the effects of this peculiarly oriental operation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INDIAN LADY.

SOON after tiffin, which only differed from breakfast by the introduction of mulligatawny, and the substitution of wine and malt liquor for tea and coffee; I felt an unconquerable desire to see my dearly beloved Julia again: for, although a few short hours only had elapsed since we parted, it seemed to me like an age. I, therefore, requested Croker to send one of his boys to get me a palanquin while I dressed.

"Oh, Jupiter! where are you going to?" demanded Croker, "at this hour of the day, when nobody stirs out unless they want a stroke of the sun."

"I am going to the Commissary General's," I replied.

"The Commissary General!" exclaimed Croker. "What do you want with him?"

"Nothing at all with him," I replied; "but I want to see his niece, a charming girl with whom I came out in the 'Cumberland.'"

"Whew!" exclaimed Croker, with something between a whistle and an interjection. "Is that the way the land lies? Then by Jupiter you shall have the handsomest palanquin in all Bombay."

He accordingly despatched an cmissary for one of these vehicles, and I had just completed my toilette, when it arrived. It was, in fact, a very handsome specimen of an oriental carriage; light and graceful in its form, painted and varnished with great brilliancy, but perfect taste; with silver mountings, pale green satin furniture, humauls all dressed in snow-white tunics, trowsers and turbans; and a couple of chobdars in front, with ebony clubs, and silver pine-apple heads to them. I congratulated Chouree Mootoo on the good taste of his selection; and as I extended myself in this *ne*

plus ultra of luxurious locomotion, Croker addressed the humauls:

"You standy Burra Sahib Commissary General in the fort?"

"Ho, Sahib," was the reply, "we standy, we standy."

"Then," said Croker, "you take the Colonel Bahauder Sahib to say salaam to Commissary General Sahib. You juldee jow, and you shall have cherry-merry."

"Acha, Sahib," replied the humauls. "Colonel Sahib bhote burra Bahauder."

Off we accordingly set at a very brisk pace, the humauls keeping step admirably with the grunting sort of song peculiar to them; and in due time we entered the *porte cochère* of a splendid mansion in the fort, the chobdars shouting at the very top of their lungs, "Colonel Bahauder Sahib! Colonel Bahauder Sahib!"

I descended from the palanquin amidst a double row of sable domestics; all salaaming as I passed, and repeating from one to another, "Colonel Bahauder Sahib! Colonel Bahauder Sahib!" The announcement was caught up as I mounted a magnificent flight

of stone steps; and was echoed and re-echoed through a suite of lofty apartments, gorgeously furnished, by another double row of domestics; till the whole building rang again with "Colonel Bahauder Sahib! Colonel Bahauder Sahib!"

Thus I passed from one stately room to another; walking upon floors of such highly-polished chunam, that the rich furniture, beautiful paintings, gold and china vases, or-molu candelabra, and all the et ceteras of Oriental pomp and luxury, were reflected in them as in the purest mirrors. I felt, indeed, as if I was an unwarranted intruder on such fairy-like magnificence, and almost wished myself back again amidst Croker's snakes, scorpions, and centipedes: but I mentally repeated to myself my poor father's grand panacea for all sublunary trials,—"a light heart and a thin pair of breeches,"—and boldly pushed forward to see the adventure out.

At length, to my great relief, the chobdars ceased announcing, "the Colonel Bahauder Sahib," and I found myself alone in a gorgeous saloon, the furniture of which seemed to me to be all gold: sandal-wood cabinets, satin-wood chairs, sofas, and ottomans, covered with

yellow silk damask furniture, upon which I was almost afraid to sit down: while the broiling sun was carefully excluded by gilt Venetians, that just shed a golden haze over the scene; and a broad *punkah* overhead was swayed gently to and fro by invisible agency, diffusing a delicious and odorous breeze throughout the apartment.

When I had sat here for some time, admiring over and over again everything that surrounded me, and contrasting this Oriental splendor with the bamboo shed of my friend Croker, I at length heard a rustling of silks and satins, and anticipated the pleasure of seeing my dear Julia in another moment. But I was disappointed: instead of the sylph-like figure, and lively, confiding manner of my mistress, a tall, stout, and stately lady, of a certain age, approached; with good but coarse features, and, as I thought, an air of vulgarity; in spite of her rich and fashionable Parisian dress, and the hundred-guinea Cashmere shawl that was thrown over her shoulders with studied negligence.

I made a very low bow to this somewhat formidable figure; but she received it with a gracious smile, and an inviting gesture to sit

beside her on a very elegant vis-à-vis sofa; when as she apparently expected me to open the conference, I said,—

"I have taken the liberty of calling, to pay my respects to Miss Monson, after her voyage."

"My niece," she replied, "is highly honored by your attention. Your visit has been announced to her, and she will be here presently."

"This is delightful!" I mentally exclaimed. "How utterly free from pride these great people are in India! Here am I, a poor subaltern, received into a princely palace, as if I were the Commander-in-Chief himself."

I made my acknowledgments to the stately lady of the mansion, and we entered into familiar chat about the sayings and doings of the mighty ones of the earth; which was maintained on my part with all the tact of which I was master, and no small share of invention to supply my lack of knowledge. I was surprised, however, at the facility with which I imposed on my fair hostess: and this, with a few grammatical slips and other solecisms on her part, led me to conclude that, however she came to be enshrined in this golden

temple, she was not altogether racy of the soil, and born to the manner.

"You have, of course," she observed, "mixed a great deal in the high society of the *metroplus?*"

"A good deal, Madam," I replied, "during the very short periods that I have not been on foreign service."

"Then I suppose you have met with some members of our family in the *bo-munday?*" said the lady.

"I have met Lord Monson's family, frequently," I said, "but I was not aware of the relationship."

"Oh, yes!" she said, "the Commissary General *of the Forces,*" (thus she was pleased to designate her husband,) "is first cousin to his lordship; and, indeed, if his lordship's sons *was* to die, he would be next heir to the title."

"This," said I to myself, "is indeed a remote contingency, all his lordship's sons being married, with large families."

"You haven't," she said, "fallen in *promiscuously*, at Windsor, or Carlton Palace, with my mamma, the dowager Mrs. Jenkinson,

of Pentonville, a distant relation of the Liverpool family?"

"I cannot say I have had that honor," I replied; "but I certainly have seen a very distinguished personage in the royal ante-chamber, on a levée day, bearing a great resemblance to yourself and Lord Liverpool."

"Oh, you see the family likeness, then," she said. "You are, probably, acquainted with his lordship?"

"I have had the honour," I replied, "of meeting his lordship in the House of Peers."

"Oh, indeed!" she responded, "that was a great distinction: but officers of rank, to be sure, have many privileges that your tag-rag-and-bobtail subalterns can't pretend to."

This was a shot between wind and water that I was not prepared for, and I fear I looked foolish; but she rattled on:

"You have, of course, attended the Prince Regent's drawing-rooms?"

"Oh, yes," I replied, "frequently;" for, like other fools, I had indeed often gone to see the company in their progress thither.

"My mamma," said the Commissary General's lady, "was not at the last, being *ill* dis-

posed with the *fluenzar*. She was to have gone with Lord Islington's family, to whom she is nearly related. Do you know Islington?"

"Perfectly well," I replied, "especially the Angel Tavern."

Here, from some cause or other, it was the lady's turn to look foolish: she started, blushed, turned deadly pale, stammered—indeed, I thought she was going to faint. I couldn't imagine what had caused so sudden a commotion, but thought she must have been shocked at my vulgarity in mentioning such a place; for, as it afterwards turned out, her question had reference to her relation, Lord Islington, and not to the snobbish suburb so called. This little incident, however, changed the conversation to other topics; and, seeing me look admiringly on two splendid Chinese jars, she said they were a present from the Emperor Ching Fo to the Commissary-General of the Forces. She also pointed my attention to a beautiful little cabinet of sandal-wood that perfumed the whole apartment, which was a present to herself from the Emperor of Delhi.

"I must really show you the inside of it."

she said, plunging her hand into her reticule. "But where on earth *is* my keys?"

I saw a small bunch lying on the floor, which I picked up and handed to her; at the same time, suiting my cacology to the standard of her own, I said:

"*Is* them they, Madam?"

"Oh, thank you, Colonel," she replied. "I'm quite vexed at your having the trouble."

"Colonel!" I mentally exclaimed; "can it then be possible that Croker's jest to the humauls has passed current upon this poor lady's credulity, and that I am indebted for all her condescension to my supposed military pre-eminence?"

This was mortifying to my personal vanity; but I determined not to clear up the mistake until, at least, I should see my dear Julia. I, therefore, continued to bear my blushing honours as if they really belonged to me; and lauded to the skies the house, furniture, dress and ornaments of the Commissary-General's lady, as she eloquently described to me every item; descanting, with the usual absurdity of *parvenues*, not only on the taste and beauty of the different articles, but also on their

pecuniary value, and the large sums they had respectively cost the Commissary-General of the Forces.

I was evidently making a most favourable impression on my fair hostess; which I did not fail to improve by an occasional compliment to her personal charms, such as my countrymen are said to have a happy knack at improvising. In short, she seemed on the very point of inviting me to dinner, when Julia appeared at the door, swimming in at first in a very stately manner, till she saw who it was: then, with her usual frank familiarity, she ran up to me, exclaiming:

"Oh, it's you, Percy Blake! I would have come sooner, but they told me it was Colonel Bothero, or some such name."

"Percy Blake!" cried the Commissary-General's lady, starting from the sofa bolt upright, as if under the influence of a galvanic battery.

"Yes aunt," replied the innocent Julia; "Mr. Blake that I told you of, who was so attentive to me, on board that plaguy Indiaman that was always running into one mischief or another."

"Percy Blake!" reiterated the Commissary-General's lady, actually stamping her foot with passion. "What, Sir, are you not Colonel Behauder?"

"No, Madam," I replied. "By some mistake, for which I am not accountable, I have been announced here by a rank to which I have no title; but I assure you—"

"That's enough, Sir," cried the Commissary-General's lady, with a look of decided ferocity; "good morning to you. Come along, Miss." Here she took poor Julia by the arm, with as little ceremony as a hawk would use towards a pigeon, and dragged her out of the room, exclaiming as she went: "Percy Blake, indeed! Marry-come-up, my country cousin!"

The scene was altogether so ludicrous that I threw myself down upon a sofa in a roar of unextinguishable laughter; from which I was at length roused by the entrance of a very stately dubash, who, marching up to me, said somewhat abruptly:

"Your palkee wait, Sahib."

"Very well," I said, "that will do, Chouree Mootoo."

"My name not Chouree Mootoo," he replied, sulkily; "my name Ramo Samee. Chouree Mootoo one Pariah name — not proper, Sahib, call me Chouree Mootoo."

I walked up to Ramo Samee, with a look that boded him no good; of which he seemed so convinced himself, that he turned about, and vanished with amazing celerity. I then very leisurely retraced my steps through the gorgeous apartments into which I had so unwarrantably intruded; and, seating myself in my palanquin, was borne back to the stony desert of Colabah, where the recital of my adventure elicited from Croker such a guffaw as must have been heard at Mazagong and Malabar Point.

Croker and I dined that evening at the mess of the 65th, where we heard the history of Mrs. Commissary-General Monson; the most remarkable feature of which appeared to be, that her mother had been a pastrycook; and she herself was barmaid of the Angel at Islington, when her poor husband fell in love with her.

CHAPTER V.

THE BOBBERY HUNT.

DURING breakfast the following morning, I asked Croker several times whom he meant by Purseram Bhow, the mysterious personage he had so frequently mentioned the day before: but he always evaded my question; saying, with a smile, that I would soon hear enough of Purseram Bhow, and of Hurry Punt too, but that he wouldn't spoil my pleasure by anticipation.

Croker, however, made up for his reserve on this point, by his loquacity on everything connected with sporting, of which he was an enthusiast; and he gave me such descriptions of the delights of a jungle life, as made me

curious, if not anxious, to participate in them. His bungalow, indeed, was little else than an arsenal of sylvan armoury; for the walls, if they could be so called, were everywhere hung with guns of all descriptions, powder flasks, shot-belts, tiger and boar spears, pellet bows, &c., &c., the whole being intermingled with tiger and bear skins, elk and antelope horns, and one or two enormous skins of the boa-constrictor. These were all the spoils of his own hand in the jungles of Salsette, and the neighbouring continent; to which he was frequently invited by some Mahratta chiefs, who had taken a great fancy to the Feringhee jungle-wallah.

Soon after breakfast, being informed that Major Snubley had returned from Elephanta, I got ready to report my arrival to the great man in person. Croker also dressed to accompany and introduce me; but, though the uniform did somewhat improve his outward man, he looked so tall, so gaunt, and so ungainly, that I could not forbear smiling as he strode along, flinging out his legs and arms like the sails of a lunatic windmill. He seemed, poor soul! to be sadly hampered by

the coatee, sash, sword, belt, and "all the rest of the balderdash," as he expressed himself; but he took comfort from the reflection, that the Commandant having returned from his exploring trip to the cave temples, it would now be his turn to indulge in the more rational amusement of hog-hunting, and tiger-shooting, to which he purposed introducing me without delay.

A walk of a few minutes brought us to the compound of Major Snubley; which, unlike Croker's wilderness, was walled in and kept in the most rigid neatness and good order. The parterre, which abounded with flowers and shrubs, was intersected by trim gravel walks, bordered by channels of chunam, for conveying water to every part of the grounds: while several pomegranate, custard-apple, and plantain trees, gratified at once the eye and the taste; and a deep well, with a palcotta, or balance pole, for drawing the water, afforded an abundant supply for irrigation and the bath. The bungalow was also of more elaborate pretensions; being built of sun-dried bricks, plastered, ceiled, and covered with tiles; with a good verandah, and polished chunam pillars:

while, at some paces distance in front, was raised upon arches a sort of summer-house, built in a similar manner, and commanding a view of the barracks and adjacent territory.

We found the commandant in his hall, or central apartment, for the bungalow contained three rooms; seated at a large table covered with maps, and bundles of documents tied with red tape. He was a very solemn, dignified looking person; and seemed, when we entered, to be absorbed in some very abstruse problem of civil or military statistics. With a well-affected start, as if suddenly roused from the deep profound of thought, he arose and gave me a most gracious reception: remarking, old Indian like, the freshness of my European complexion; and observing, with a sigh, that his own was just like it in '92, when he made his first campaign at Seringapatam.

"That was a great affair, Major," said Croker.

"We shall never see war on so grand a scale again, Sir," responded the Major. "It is not by such paltry expeditions as those to the Isle of France and Batavia, that a man of talent, and enterprise, can hope to rise to the

top of the tree. No, Sir; it requires such an overwhelming armament as that of Lord Cornwallis—"

"But with all that," said Croker, "you were compelled to retreat on that occasion."

"True, Sir," replied the Major, "but only for want of provisions; but when we were joined by our valued friends and allies, Hurry Punt and Purseram Bhow—"

Here Croker's eye met mine, and he indulged in a little chuckle; while I was taken so much by surprise, that it was with difficulty I could avoid laughing outright.

"Something seems to have tickled your fancy, gentlemen," said the Major: "but, as I was saying, we were falling back on our resources, till one morning, a cloud of cavalry appeared on our left flank, and supposing it was that miscreant, Tippoo, we opened a dozen field-pieces upon them; when, lo and behold! it was our friend and ally, Purseram Bhow—Hurry Punt on one flank, and Purseram Bhow on the other."

"A pize on that bitch, Juno!" exclaimed Croker, starting from his chair; "there she is tearing up all your bulbous roots," and

out he ran, unable any longer to restrain his laughter.

"A singular young man, Mr. Blake," observed the Major; "a very singular young man. The people here call him the Feringhee jungle-walla, or European wild man of the woods. We had one exactly like him at Seringapatam, in '92; and, strange to say, Purseram Bhow took a great fancy to him."

"Pray, Sir," I asked, "who was Purseram Bhow?"

"He was the commander of the Mahratta contingent in the war of '92," replied the Major, delighted at finding himself astride of his hobby; "and a very great man, Sir, in his way, was Purseram Bhow. Hurry Punt was his second in command, but I always pinned my faith on the dictum of Purseram Bhow. The Punt was glorious in the onslaught, and the Bhow mighty in retreat."

Thus the worthy Major went on, during the whole interview; ringing the changes on the two Mahratta warriors, while he favoured me with an elaborate history of that doughty campaign. Whatever point of the narrative he started from, he was sure to wind it up

with Hurry Punt or Purseram Bhow, or both. So mesmeric, indeed, was the effect this repetition had upon me, that I actually dozed with my eyes open; being utterly unconscious, for the two mortal hours during which he kept me fascinated, as it were, of any other words than Hurry Punt and Purseram Bhow.

My docility, however, had this good effect, that the worthy Major, finding me so patient a listener, invited me to share his bungalow, an offer which I gladly accepted; and some additional furniture being procured from Bombay, I was speedily installed in my new quarters, consisting of a comfortable bed-room, and the aforesaid summer-house, which I made my study and sitting-room. Here I surrounded myself, as usual, when I had means and leisure, with books, drawings, and musical instruments; very much to the disgust of my new friend Croker, who had never read a book in his life, or played upon any instrument but the drum.

"Oh! by Jupiter!" he exclaimed, "you are enough to drive a fellow mad with them books and picters, and all the rest of the balderdash. Who ever knew any good come of fluting and fiddling, and drawing riddle-me-

rees, and breaking one's head about pothery, and all the rest of the balderdash? Take a gun in your fist, Percy Blake, and let us be off to the jungle, or I'll give you up for a milksop."

I pacified Croker, with an assurance that I was ready to go whenever he chose; and he accordingly set about making preparations. In the meantime, he insisted on my joining a well-known sporting society, whose title has long been a "household word" in the *res gestæ* of the East.

Sir Lionel, the distinguished son of the once celebrated Charlotte Smith, who was, at that time, Lieutenant-Colonel of the 65th regiment, was also president of the "Bobbery Hunt:" under his auspices, I became a member of that famous sporting club, whose celebrity has long since spread from the Eastern to the Western hemisphere; though whether it still survives the chance and change of time, I am unable to inform the curious reader.

At that period, we had not subsidized the Mahrattas; nor sent the Peishwah to keep company with other ex-potentates at Benares, as Voltaire sent his dethroned kings to the carnival of Venice. Having, consequently, no

territory on the continent, our hunting was entirely confined to the original donation which Charles II. made to the Company, having no use for it himself; or rather to that small portion of it called Colabah. This being a space of not more than five or six miles in circumference, it will be readily imagined that our sport was of a very limited character; especially as the whole of our hunting ground was nearly covered with soldiers' barracks, and officers' bungalows.

We made desperate attempts, however, to persuade ourselves that we were actually hunting; and great was our glorification when we had the good fortune to start a jackal for our English fox-hounds. Then, indeed, the members turned out in full score, attired in the handsome uniform of the Hunt; while crowds of the uninitiated followed in the rear, and every description of quadruped appeared upon the field, from the high caste Arab down to the humble tattoo. Then, indeed, we made the welkin ring with our clamorous shouts: hunting the poor animal in and out of compounds and barrack yards; taking flying leaps over guns and tumbrils, and scattering drill

squads immersed in the mysteries of goose-step. Sometimes, a portly Brahmin got enveloped in the mazes of the chase, and invoked the wrath of Mahadeo on our sacrilegeous heads: sometimes, a palanquin was upset, and its wealthy occupant scattered about on the dusty road, to the uproarious amusement of the mad hunters: sometimes a whole pack of Pariah dogs would fly before us; yelping, howling, snapping at, and biting bewildered foot-passengers, in the madness of their fright; while fish-wives, pedlars, and other old women, would scatter their commodities to the winds, to avoid being trampled to death; as we swept along, like the wild huntsmen of German romance, over fence and furrow, through garden and flower-plot; riders tumbling in one direction, horses making summersaults in another; till, at last, weary and worn out, panting with heat and fatigue, we retired to the refreshing bath, to prepare for the enjoyment of the night. Then, after a late dinner, in our splendid club-room; when the social claret-jug circulated round the table, which was loaded with the riches of the eastern Pomona; and the sea-breeze, redolent of health, played refreshingly through open door and

window; we recounted our individual exploits, and laughed at the mishaps of our neighbours: or else we "woke the night-owl with a catch that would draw three souls out of one weaver;" cheerfully welcoming the small hours, and thus bringing to a happy close the labours of the day, and the glories of the Bobbery Hunt.

CHAPTER VI.

A DAY IN THE JUNGLE.

HAVING furnished myself with a stout, active, country horse, about fourteen hands high, and undergone a week's drilling with the boar-spear, under the tuition of Croker; during which we slaughtered sundry tame porkers that came in our way, without any remorse of conscience; we started about four o'clock one morning for Salsette, to have a day or two in the jungle. Our train consisted of our *ghorawallas* and grass-cutters, for the use and behoof of the nags; our maty-boys, for our own especial comfort, each with a brandy-bottle and a goglet of fresh water; three or four coolies with spears and rifles; some others

with the dogs; and a couple of *bangy-wallas*, with basket-boxes, containing some creature comforts and changes of linen, slung on bamboos across their shoulders: our respective dubashes had been sent on the evening before to prepare breakfast for us.

As we rode across the Esplanade, the Parsees were already congregating to prostrate themselves on the first appearance of their God, as the glorious luminary rose above the horizon: but, though anxious to witness this novel and interesting sight, we were obliged to hurry on; for, as Croker remarked, we had eight or nine miles still to cover, and though the scent lies well before day-light, it evaporates very rapidly after sunrise.

We accordingly pushed on through Black Town, and past Byculla and Parel, the Governor's residence; till in due time we arrived at the shallow strait that separates Bombay from Salsette, across which Governor Duncan had recently thrown a causeway: but, as we cantered our nags over his Excellency's road, we little dreamt that some forty years later, even while I pen these lines, the same narrow opening would be spanned by a railway; and the crown-

ing triumph of British science, capital, and skill, exhibited for the first time to the wondering eyes of thousands upon thousands of our sable fellow-subjects.

But hark to cover! The sun is just tipping the lofty pinnacles of the Western Ghauts, whose magnificent range extends on our right beyond the Tannah river; while on our left are the rocky ridges of Salsette, crowned with hanging woods and matted jungle, interspersed with richly-cultivated fields, hamlets, and cottages: the road, as we proceed, becoming embowered under lofty trees, and discovering many a vista of some of the most magnificent scenery in the world.

We soon came to a small choultry in the wood, where we found a host of *peons, shikarees,** and beaters, armed with *latties*, or long bamboos, rusty matchlocks, hunting-spears, and tulwars; under the command of the Jemmaders of some neighbouring villages; who all salaamed profoundly to the great Croke Sahib, as they called him, by whose orders they were assembled. We also found our dubashes getting breakfast ready; and, as this meal had to

* Messengers and hunters.

be despatched before we commenced business, we hurried them in their preparations.

While these were in progress, a horde of fifty or sixty wild-looking savages, all naked but the langooty, rushed down upon us from every opening in the jungle; and, drawing up in front of the choultry, saluted Croke Sahib as they would have done Nimrod, or Nadir Shah, or any other mighty hunter of biped or quadruped. These were charcoal burners: fellows that dwell entirely in the woods, and hold no other communion with their civilized brethren of Bombay than by the silent interchange between their charcoal and such commodities as they may require from the market. On the present occasion, it seems, they volunteered their services, and those of twenty or thirty pariah dogs that accompanied them, to the great Croke Sahib; and the latter, having addressed a few sentences to them in their own dialect, which appeared to give general satisfaction, they all squatted down on the greensward, and awaited further orders with the most exemplary patience.

Croker now held a conference with the Jemmadars and Shikarees, and a plan of opera-

tions was laid down; in pursuance of which they, and the beaters, and charcoal-burners with all their pariah dogs, who having excellent noses, are very useful on such occasions, set off to take up good positions for beating an extensive sugar plantation; in which a sounder, or herd of hogs had been marked down by the Shikarees the evening before.

They were also attended by several horn-blowers, and tom-tom beaters; it being necessary to muster on that side of the plantation as powerful a concert of diabolical sounds as possible, to interrupt the repose of our swinish enemies.

We then sat down to an excellent breakfast; at which, in addition to other good things, we were regaled with the bumbalo, a superior sort of sand-eel, served up with kedgeree, a dish consisting of boiled rice and split peas, enriched with butter and coloured with turmeric. We had also the pomfret, a flat-fish that abounds at Bombay; of so exquisite a flavour, that a celebrated gourmand swore it was worth a voyage to India to enjoy it. In spite, however, of all these viands, we hurried over our morning meal; Croker from constitutional

eagerness to be at the sport, and I from an ardent curiosity to witness, for the first time, this boasted Oriental pastime.

Our horses having been well groomed and fed in the interim, were also eager for the field: and as I sprang on the back of mine, he bounded forward as if he actually shared in the excitement of the chase; while I firmly grasped my spear, a bamboo about nine feet long, with a glittering blade of eight inches, which Croker had sharpened on a hone for me, till its double edge was like that of a razor.

"Now rein in a little, Percy," said my friend, "and take my advice: fair and easy goes far, you know, and that shall be my motto; but you, I see, are full of tuzzy-muzzy, and all the rest of the balderdash."

"You wouldn't have me go to a hunt," I said, "as I would to a funeral."

"By no manner of means," replied Croker; "but you'll have occasion for all your horse's mettle when the boar is at speed."

"Speed!" I exclaimed; "ha, ha, ha! The speed of a pig! That's capital!"

"Laugh and welcome," said Croker, "but take a fool's advice. Keep your horse well in

hand, and look to your seat, which I see is that of a fox-hunter; but you'll find the ground about here full of man-traps, and now and then a *bowlie*,* half full of water, that may bring you up in spite of the proverb."

"Ha, ha, ha! very good," I replied; "the morning air has sharpened your wit, Croker."

"Now then," he continued, "you and I will take our places on one side of the sugar-cane piece as silent as the grave, while the beaters make the devil's own row at the other. Then, when the hog bolts out, let us start fair for the first spear in him; keep you to his left side; and when you deliver your spear right behind the shoulder, file off to your left, to make way for the next comer."

I promised to observe all his directions, and we proceeded accordingly to take up our ground.

"But don't forget," said Croker, reining back, "that the boar's tusk is six inches clear of the jaw, and that if he gives you or your horse a rip, he will fit you for Padre Burrows's *godown*."†

* A well.

† The churchyard, or "storehouse," of the Reve-

"I'll keep a steady eye on the gentleman," I said.

"One word more," said Croker: "the boar always *rips*, and the sow always *bites*; so take care of your toes from the female salute."

We at length took up our respective positions, about one hundred yards apart, on one side of a fine sugar-cane plantation, surrounded by fields of wheat, barley, and other grain. On the opposite side of the plantation our beaters were ranged, about five or six feet distant from each other, waiting for the signal to begin. This being given by Croker, they advanced regularly; beating the canes with their *latties*, or long bamboos, shouting with all their might, sounding horns and beating tom-toms; which, added to the yelping and barking of two dozen dogs, made such an infernal din, as might have scared all the boars in the jungle.

Meanwhile, we were as silent as the grave, eagerly expecting the outburst of the foe; while our horses, pricking their ears, and occasionally shuddering, seemed to anticipate

rend Mr. Burrows, at that time garrison chaplain at Bombay.

the advent of some terrific monster. My own mind, I frankly confess, began to be somewhat disturbed at being so long kept on the rack of expectation for though a daring horseman after the hounds, and generally in at the death wherever I hunted, in Ireland, in Leicestershire, and in the Peninsula; yet the situation in which I now stood was so perfectly novel, and the nature of the game was so avowedly savage and ferocious, that I may well be excused for not feeling quite at home, any more than Peter the Great himself did, in this the first of my fields.

My courage, however, had not time to ooze out at my fingers' ends, for the canes suddenly crashed, and were rent asunder within ten yards of where I stood: then forth rushed, with a horrible grunt, a huge black monster, larger than the largest pig I had ever seen; with long tusks, bristles erect, and champing his foaming mouth, while his fiery eyes glared around with unmistakeable fury.

My horse gave a sudden spring, then stood trembling, as if rooted to the spot; till Croker shouted "charge!" when driving the spurs into his flanks, I dashed madly

after the flying foe, followed by Croker, and all the dogs, in full and glorious cry.

But, if the size and ferocity of the monster had surprised me, I was perfectly astonished at his fleetness. It was somewhat early in the season; and he had not been feeding long enough on the luxuriant crop of canes, which are so nutritive and fattening, to become indolent and fleshy: he therefore sprang through the wheat with a rapidity which at one time actually distanced us all. We had to pass through some paddy-fields, however, which, being deep and muddy, apparently distressed him, and we evidently gained upon the chase; till, at last, as we tore away over some broken ground, interspersed with rocks and low jungle, I came within a reasonable distance, and delivered my spear with all the force and velocity of which I was master. Unluckily, however, a large pariah dog had, at the moment, seized the boar by the left ear; which, causing him to swerve a little to the right, my spear pinned the dog to the earth, and the liberated savage rushed on again with fresh rapidity.

"Way there!" shouted Croker, just at my

horse's crupper; and spurring out of his path, I turned off to seek another spear. With this I was soon furnished by my *ghorawalla*, a very active fellow, who had nearly kept up with us; and, resuming the chase, I went full tilt after Croker.

Being a heavy rider, from his unwieldy stature, my friend lacked the speed with which I had opened the chase: but he made up for this by superior experience; and, just as I wss coming up with him, hand over hand, he darted his spear right through the body of the boar. Not being struck in a vital part, however, the monster still kept on his way towards a jungle copse, that would have effectually screened him from our pursuit: but, ere he had gained this friendly shelter, I plunged my spear into him just behind the left shoulder; and as it pierced his heart, he instantly fell dead. I had thus the honor of killing the first game; though Croker had the still greater glory of delivering the first spear, and drawing the first blood.

Several of our attendants now came up and innumerable praises were showered upon us, while the panting dogs and horses rested after

their severe and heavy run. We then wended our way back to the plantation, which some of our most experienced shikarees assured us still contained more of the sounder, or herd; and having sent our beaters off to their former post, we took up our stations as before.

But this time we were left waiting a much longer period; for the game kept so close, that it was not in the power of voice or tomtom to dislodge it from the dense and almost impervious cover. It was in vain that the beaters threshed the canes unmercifully: equally vain were the wild sounds of collary horn, the barking of the dogs, and the frantic shouts of the peons, coolies, and charcoal-burners; not a stir was perceptible where the game was supposed to lie. At last the noise ceased altogether, and Croker, calling to one of the shikarees, asked him what was the matter.

"Master please, Croke Sahib" replied the shikaree, "coolie-logue plenty 'fraid; too much frightened come."

"That not proper business," said Croke Sahib. "What for I give cherry-merry?"

"No can help," replied the shikaree with a deprecating look. "Cooly poor man, Sahib:

spose him bite leg, spose him rip belly, who can give rice to him piccaninny?"

As I could pretty well make out this Anglo-Indian dialogue, I asked Croker what the ordinary mode of proceeding was in such cases, which I supposed were not unfrequent in hog-hunting.

"It often happens," replied Croker, "that the beaters get terrified in this way; for a sow, if she has young ones, will frequently dash in amongst them, and bite them dreadfully, right and left. Our only resource, therefore, on such an occasion as the present, is to go boldly into the cane-piece, and call the sow to account with the grooved barrel."

"Then I claim the post of honor," I said. "You have had the first spear, let me have the first shot."

"By Jupiter, you shall then," said Croker; "but I'll be ready to back your tack, as we say at Skibbereen."

The beaters were accordingly ordered out of the plantation, that none of them might get hit in the *mêlée;* then, having ascertained as nearly as possible, the direction in which the game was supposed to lie, we dismounted, and

taking our rifles, prepared to enter the cane-piece. Croker followed me by convention at a distance of ten paces; and it was also settled that he was not, on any account, to take the first shot: these preliminaries being adjusted, we advanced towards the scene of action, our peons and ghorawallas calling out—

"Cobberdar, Blake Sahib! Plenty bad wild pig. Spose Croke Sahib go first, that proper business."

But I laughed at their warning; and, determined to see the adventure out, I stept boldly into the cane-piece, my rifle at the present, and my finger on the trigger.

"These breeding sows," observed Croker, "for I suppose this is one, do more mischief to the canes, than the boars themselves: for they not only devour them, but cut them up for litter: and to make little huts like, to cover them and their savage brood."

The canes were eight or ten feet high, waving to and fro over our heads, as the light breeze played among their silky tops; but the stems were so close together, as to render our progress slow and difficult. We could see, however, pretty well some distance before us;

and with our rifles cocked and protruded in advance, we were tolerably well prepared for anything that might happen. But it was, I admit now in my old age, a fool-hardy enterprise; to beard, even in her very den, amidst the close and almost impervious jungle of sugar-cane, the grisly monster whose mate had so lately startled and astonished me even in the open field. Youth, however, and animal spirits, stifled the voice of prudence in our breasts; and on we went wantonly tempting, as it were, the utmost malice of fate.

We had proceeded in this manner, for some time through the wilderness of canes; our eyes, our ears on the alert, our expectation on the rack, and the profound silence that prevailed, adding intensely to the excitement of the scene. At length, we approached a spot that was partially cleared of the canes, which had been eaten away by the voraciou sanimals; a great portion of half-consumed fragments being heaped up in a sort of mound in the centre. I was making my way to this spot, the canes crashing at every step I took; when the mound of rubbish, as I took it to be, suddenly burst open; and, with a fearful grunt, out sprang an immense

sow, followed by a dozen young hogs, her hopeful progeny, squeaking and tumbling higgledy-piggledy over each other.

With a deadly spring, the monster made at me: but, though the surprise was perfect, I had presence of mind enough to receive her with the muzzle of my rifle, which fortunately entered her open mouth, as I pulled the trigger; and the balls from both barrels went crashing down her gullet, putting a speedy period to her marauding existence. The impetus of the bound, however, bore me to the earth; and there I lay under the dead body of the enemy, till Croker came up, and with some difficulty relieved me from the burthen. The peons and coolies were now summoned to our aid, and speedily carried forth the grisly prey from the cane-piece; singing Io pæans to the praise and glory of Percy Blake Sahib, Gureeb purwaun and Bahauder Jung.*

Meanwhile, the young grunters, whose nest I had so effectually broken up, having rushed in their terror, out of the plantation, were speedily set upon by all the dogs of high and low degree; poligar, and pariah, greyhound, and bull-dog,

* Protector of the poor and valiant lord.

and despatched with multitudinous wounds; the spoil of our morning's sport thus embracing every individual of the whole family, whose depredations had long been a source of annoyance to the neighbouring villages. Their head men accordingly came and thanked us; and hoped that Croke Sahib, and Percy Blake Sahib, would often visit their neighbourhood, and relieve them from more of the savage monsters with which their jungles abounded.

CHAPTER VII.

INTERVIEW WITH A BOA-CONSTRICTOR.

TIFFIN being now announced as ready, we repaired to our choultry; where, after a shower-bath, in the ordinary manner from a chatty, and a change of linen, we sat down, comparatively cool and refreshed, in our sylvan shade, though the thermometer ranged at 120° in the sun. It is needless to trouble my reader with our bill of fare: on such occasions as the present, if our *cuisine* is not the best in the world, it is at least the most *appetissante;* when youth and exercise impart a healthy tone to the stomach, and the gastric juices are not impeded in the due performance of their functions. A satisfactory portion of the solids having been disposed of,

we cocked our legs up on the table, as we smoked our tcheroots; and brandy paunee being the order of the day, we drank, and laughed, and chatted over the morning's incidents.

Somehow or other, it occurred to me that Croker was unreasonably jealous of this last exploit of mine; for he harped more than he ought to have done on my first misadventure, in spearing the pariah dog instead of the boar, which he said would make a capital story at the next meet of the Bobbery Hunt. He was evidently piqued, I thought, that he had not killed the sow himself; and I accused him mentally of selfish ambition in wishing to monopolize all the honors of the day. He was, however, a very good fellow, with whom I did not wish to quarrel: and lest some unlucky or unguarded word might disturb our harmony, I threw my rifle over my arm, and sauntered into the jungle.

Here nature had strewn her riches, and squandered her beauties with a lavish hand: the towering teak and blackwood intermingled their leafy branches, to guard the greensward from the parching splendors of the sun;

whose beams, occasionally breaking through the dense mass of foliage, scattered long patches of brilliant verdure across the deep cool shade. The tufty mango grew side by side with the spreading tamarind; and the tall slender columns of the bamboo shot upwards, in diverging rays from one common centre; their united stems forming a bulwark impenetrable to all but the insidious snake, whose yellow and greenish coils are not unfrequently taken for the vegetable itself. The rocky heights that sprang up amidst this glorious woodland were crowned with whole forests of wild Palmyra trees; while occasional patches of cultivation displayed the lilac nym, the Jack, the guava, the plantain, and various other fruit trees; whose forms and produce are equally pleasing, wholesome, and nutricious.

Absorbed in admiration and delight, I wandered on through this ever-varying wilderness; sheltered from the sun by the vast vegetable umbrella that spread above, swarming with myriads of birds, monkeys, and squirrels: while below, a distant antelope would sometimes cross my path, or a startled hare spring from its form, or a peacock or jungle fowl rush

on whirring wing from one covert to another, to avoid the unwonted stranger.

In the midst of so many objects of natural beauty and interest, some of an artificial character would frequently intervene: such as an ancient tank, whose finely-chiselled steps and sculptured ornaments spoke of past glories; and whose green, stagnant water was overgrown with the broad leaves of the lotus. Or a mouldering terrace, or mythological antiquity; a bull, or a lingam, indicating the site as one where the worship of Mahadeo had prevailed in all its sanguinary splendor, long ere the image-making and idol-breaking Christian had discovered and desecrated the recluse and hallowed precinct.

One of these venerable remains of bygone superstition was an immense artificial cavern; hollowed out by human labour and ingenuity from the bowels of a granite mountain, whose solid material was sculptured into a variety of pillars, altars, and rude images of the deity; in his triple attributes of creator, preserver, and destroyer, personified under the forms of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. Two of these figures of collosal magnitude, each at least twenty feet high,

which stood at the entrance, still bore the coating of red paint with which they had been daubed by the Portuguese, who had turned this pagan temple into a Christian church; with the view, probably, of winning over to the new faith some proselytes from the creed of ancient days and long-cherished associations.

Having gratified my curiosity, in spite of the nauseous and suffocating air of this cavern, which was now only frequented by bats, jackals, and other birds and beasts of filthy habits; I gladly inhaled once more the pure air of the jungle, and wandered onwards, ruminating on the mysteries of faith and diversity of creeds that have puzzled and perplexed the human brain; setting man against his brother man, with the ferocity of the tiger, and in the name of a God of love and mercy, through every age and clime of this wondrous world. In short, I became so involved in my own speculations, that I lost my way; and the more I endeavoured to retrace it, in a wilderness where every object was multiplied an hundred fold, with the most perplexing similarity, the more effectually I became puzzled in the labyrinth.

The sun was now declining towards the

horizon, and the shadows every moment became broader and deeper. Apprehensive that I might be overtaken by the night in a place that was neither safe nor agreeable, I fired off both my barrels several times, in the hope of attracting the notice of some of my party. This at last had the desired effect; for I first heard a distant and faint halloo, and this was succeeded by several others around me, which all seemed to be converging towards the spot where I stood. Many of these sounds were doubtless nothing more than echoes: but it was evident that my companions were on the search for me; and, at length, to my great relief, I could distinguish the voice of Rungapa, as he shouted out,—

"Cobberdaur, Percy Blake Sahib! Plenty baugh hi!"

It was, to be sure, very encouraging to learn that there were plenty of tigers in the jungle; and I looked around me suspiciously into every brake and thicket which might serve as cover to the feline monsters. At length, nearly exhausted by fatigue and anxiety, I sat down on the long, round stem of a palmyra tree, which lay stretched across my path, half

buried in rank weeds and jungle-grass; determined to wait there till some one should come to my assistance.

They approached at length on every side; and the first that appeared was Croker himself, who gave a view hallo the moment he perceived me. He was coming down a gentle slope laughing and singing in his usual unsophisticated manner, till he got within thirty yards of where I sat, fairly fagged with the exertions of the day. Then suddenly stopping, and looking, as I thought, particularly wicked, he brought his rifle to the present, and fired off both barrels directly at me; so effectually, indeed, that I tumbled backwards from the object on which I was seated, mortally wounded, as I naturally concluded.

I jumped up, however; and, though I looked upon myself as a dead man, the most savage revenge inspired my breast: for it struck me that Croker had been either seized with sudden frenzy; or, in a paroxysm of jealous spite, had taken advantage of this secluded spot to murder one whose morning exploit had cast his own into the shade. I therefore sprang at him, determined to avail myself of the few remaining

moments of existence to punish his treachery. I seized him by the collar, and shook him, tall and towering as he was; but to my utter amazement he was choking with laughter.

"By Jupiter!" at last he exclaimed, "you are mad, Blake. Just look at what you were sitting on."

I looked, and beheld, to my horror and astonishment, that the palmyra stem on which I had been sitting was in motion; writhing in frightful convulsions, lashing the rocks, trees, and brambles with the most intense and destructive fury.

"Stand clear of him!" shouted Croker, dragging me away from the spot. "If he gives you a whisk of his tail, you're done for!"

Bewildered and stupified, I gazed on the phenomenon, till the supernatural convulsions gradually subsided; and the object, whatever it was, animal or vegetable, lay gasping, fluttering, and finally motionless and deprived of existence. I felt as if in the paroxysm of a terrible dream, ready to yield up the ghost to a frightful nightmare; and I stupidly gazed on Croker, as he joyfully cried out,—

"Oh Jupiter! what a beautiful boa!"

"A boa!" I repeated, forgetting at the moment that there was anything else in existence under that title, but the once fashionable appendage to a lady's dress.

Croker drew me cautiously towards the spot; and then, for the first time, I comprehended that the supposed palmyra tree, on which I had been sitting, was actually a monstrous boa-constrictor; which, having gorged an immense prey, was lying half-concealed amidst the long grass, in that state of torpid indulgence peculiar to the gigantic reptile: otherwise I must have paid with my life for the liberty I took in making a camp-stool of him. He was now perfectly dead, having received both balls in his head; which, to Croker's great mortification, was dreadfully shattered.

"By Jupiter!" said Croker, "I'll engage that fellow swallowed a young jackass this morning; and if I hadn't killed him—"

"He'd have swallowed an old one this evening," I added, finishing the sentence for him. "Too true, my excellent friend," I continued, "a donkey, indeed, I must have

been to suppose you were murdering me at the very moment you so admirably saved my life."

"Oh! that's all balderdash," replied Croker, with his usual *insouciance*, "you'll do as much for me another time, Blake. I wouldn't have tried it though," he continued, "if I didn't know you could stand fire."

Peons, coolies, and charcoal-burners were now summoned to the spot to bear off the glorious spoil; and as they bent under the enormous load, which they carried on bamboos, Croker exclaimed in high glee:

"Twenty-six feet long, and four feet in girth. By Jupiter! 'tis a beautiful boa!"

That night, after a plentiful supper, and quant. suf. of brandy paunee, we spread our mats on the chunam floor of the choultry and slept the sleep of hunters. The following day was devoted to skinning and salting the skin of the "beautiful boa;" an operation too disgusting for me even to look upon; but which afforded as much delight to Croker as the one in which I first beheld him engaged the morning I landed.

On the third day, having first satisfied

our sylvan followers to their hearts' content, we returned to Colabah, with such trophies as attracted all the world to Croker's bungalow. The snake was christened by universal consent "Paddy Blake's boa;" a name still current amongst the Hamadryads of Dungaree, and the young carpenters of Mazagong: and it is but little to say that so great a monster was never seen before or since in Old Woman's Island.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MASSOOLAH BOAT.

THE nine days wonder occasioned by this singular and amusing transaction had scarcely subsided, and I was actually making preparations to follow my dear Julia to Goa, whither she had been sent to avoid me, and snatch the golden fruit from its guardian dragon, when we received orders to proceed instanter to Madras; to which presidency my regiment had returned from Batavia.

Here was an interruption to my promised joys: for I had actually engaged a passage in a Patamar to Goa; and Croker had exacted a promise from his friend the garrison chaplain, that he would tie the irrevocable knot for u

on our return to Bombay. But this cursed route baffled my hopes, for I was refused leave of absence, point blank, the Indiaman being ready at her moorings to take us on board; and I was thus compelled, for the present, to curb my impatience for the bonds of matrimony.

I shall never forget the scene of our embarkation: one hundred and fifty recruits, and two hundred women and children, black, white, brown, and whitey-brown, every cast of feature, every shade of colour, European, Eurasian, and native Hindoo! The row was stupendous; the confusion of tongues surpassed that of Babel: the squabbles of the soldiers with the lascars, the outcries of the women, the screams of the children, and the barking of Croker's two dozen dogs, produced altogether an uproar on the pier-head, in the boats, and on board the Indiaman, such as had never been witnessed before, even in that noisy locality. For the settlement of the thousand and one disputes that arose from such prolific sources, every one came to me: Croker having gone off to the brigade major of king's troops, to get an order for the embarkation of his dogs, and

the skin of his boa-constrictor; the latter having been refused admittance on the plea that, being badly cured, it was disgusting and infectious in smell and appearance. Major Snubley, in despair of being able to effect anything like peace, also took himself off, remarking to me as he went over the ship's side:

"Purseram Bhow would never tolerate such a scene as this, Sir: he would either blow up the ship, or bow-string the women and children, as the shortest solution of the difficulty. He was a great man, Sir, in his way, was Purseram Bhow."

At last all got on board, but here a new difficulty presented itself: for the orlop-deck, which is always appropriated to troops, was chock full of cotton and opium for China; and so was a great portion of the main-deck, the guns even being stowed away in the hold, to make room for those precious commodities. It was in vain, that I shouted for the captain: he was not to be found; and the first mate was a crabbed sort of cross between a bull-dog and terrier, that neither would nor could do anything in the matter. He said it was all the

fault of the governor in council, who knew the crowded state in which the ship was, and should not have sent so many troops on board. The weather was fine, he added; and the men and women might stow themselves away on the forecastle, and the booms and boats amidships; all that his crew wanted being room to work the ship.

Fortunately, we had delightful weather, and a favourable passage. In a week, we rounded Ceylon, having a splendid view of Adam's Peak and its subordinate mountains; and, in another, the long low coast of Coromandel hove in sight; sprinkled with cocoa-nut topes, with here and there the lofty tower of a pagoda rising above the flat, monotonous horizon. Great, indeed, was our jubilation, when we came to anchor in the roadstead of Madras; and beheld the marble-like aspect of the lines of palaces, as they seemed to be, that stretched along the beach to the northward of fort St. George; whose battlements, bristling with cannon, were washed by the spray of the well-known surf, as it broke in thunder on the sandy shore.

Towards evening, we were amused with the

approach of a catamaran: this was nothing but two logs of cocoa-nut tree, lashed together; on which the boatman, if I may so call him, sat squat on his hams, with a paddle in his hands, that he used alternately, right and left. As he came alongside, bobbing up and down, like a piece of cork, with the motion of the waves; he took a chit, or note, from his langooty, or waistcloth; and handed it to a seaman at a lower-deck port, for the *burra Sahib.* This was an order to get the troops in readiness to land forthwith; and soon after, we were surrounded by ten or twelve Massoolah boats, to take us to shore.

It was not, however, without misgiving, that we entrusted our bodies to the safeguard of these singular specimens of naval architecture. Let the reader imagine a huge, shapeless, hollow shell, without deck, masts, sails, or rigging; formed of rough planks of the cocoa-nut tree, actually stitched together (there not being a single nail in the whole structure) with a sort of twine, made from the fibrous coating of the cocoa-nut, and he will readily understand the diffidence with which we stepped on board such a shaking, bending, pliable, fabric; which

might, for aught we knew, collapse with our weight, and carry us all to the bottom. The Massoolah boat is, however, the only description of vessel that can live in this tremendous surf; which would dash the most substantial vessel, that ever was built in England, to atoms in a few moments.

Our crew consisted of eight or ten wild-looking fellows, naked all but the langooty; who, with long uncouth oars, impelled us gently forward, until we approached the outer wave of the surf; while our elastic boat, yielding to every pressure, seemed ready, as we thought, to burst asunder at the first shock, and plunge us into the deep. Suddenly the boatmen set up a wild, vociferous chorus of "ulla! ulla! ulla!" which increased to an extraordinary rapidity of enunciation, as we rose to the summit of a watery mountain, for we were now within the influence of the surf.

Scarcely had we crested this enormous wave, which was at least twenty feet high, when we were plunged into a deep and foaming abyss; the song of the boatmen now sounding in our ears like the yells of so many fiends, rejoiced at having entrapped their prey. The land had

totally disappeared from our eyes, and nothing was visible but two huge walls of water, supporting, as it were, the canopy of heaven. We had barely time to wonder at this strange position when, with a fearful hoist, we found ourselves elevated to the summit of another mountain wave; plunged again into a foaming abyss; lifted for the third time to another watery pinnacle, and then, with a long impetuous sweep, cast high and dry upon the beach.

By the time we had collected our scattered senses, we found ourselves safe from the thundering surge; and surrounded by a host of smiling and obsequious dubashes, maty-boys, coolies, humauls, ghoracurras, &c., &c., who offered us every possible comfort, accommodation, and luxury; as if they were the ready agents of some beneficent genius who presided over this enchanted land.

We had no time, however, to avail ourselves of their tempting offers; for we were marched off immediately for Poonamalee, an extensive depôt, some fifteen miles distant. But, as we jogged along on the beautiful Mount-road, smooth and level as a bowling green, and lined on each side with splendid palaces, luxuriant

gardens, and park-like pleasure-grounds, I felt inclined to repeat the well-known Persian couplet:

> Oh! if there be an Elysium on earth,
> It is this! It is this!

Sol, in Homeric phrase, had now sunk into the arms of expecting Thetis, but the atmosphere was excessively hot and sultry. Major Snubley had accommodated himself with a palanquin for the march; Croker had hired a tattoo, which when he mounted, his long legs swept the ground: but I withstood all temptations of a similar nature, being determined on all occasions to walk with the men; a species of magnanimity which greatly excited the wonder and contempt of the natives. A number of hackeries, doolies, and other conveyances having been hired for the women and children, brought up the rear, with a long line of bullocks laden with our baggage; and thus we proceeded on our route, to the great admiration of the mulls, as the Madras people are called, from their fondness for mullikatauny.

But night had now come down; and, though a splendid moon had risen, we had scarcely got

half-way upon our journey, when two or three of the men began to complain that they couldn't see.

"Hollo! hollo!" cried one, "I'm blind!"

"By jingo, I'm stone blind!" cried another, as they both began to stagger about till they fell down by the road-side, where they were soon joined by several others in the same predicament.

"What's this? what's this?" exclaimed Major Snubley, as his humauls now came grunting along. "Is it a mutiny? Purseram Bhow would blow these fellows away from the mouth of a twenty-four pounder."

"Fiddlestick, mutiny!" responded Croker. "It's no mutiny, but blindness; the men are all getting blind in front."

"Oh, if that be all," said the Major, "you have only to push on, Croker, with those that can see; those that cannot must stay where they are, with a few men to look after them, till the sun rises, when they will be sure to recover their sight. I know this night-blindness perfectly well; the first time I ever observed it, Mr. Blake, was one evening when I commanded guard of honor over Purseram Bhow, in the ungle that surrounds Savindroog—"

Here, luckily for me, the major's humauls suddenly whipt up the palanquin, and bore him off in the midst of his story; the last of which I heard was a murmuring repetition of Purseram Bhow—ow—ow, which chimed in passably well with the ordinary chorus of the palanquin boys.

"Fall in, men!" shouted Croker. "By Jupiter! this is more of the balderdash. Keep your sections now, bad scran to you, for an awkward squad as ye are. Slope arms! quick march!" and on we went again; blind men falling out occasionally, and lying down patiently by the road-side till the sun got up.

At length, about twelve o'clock we arrived at Poonamalee, with about half our men, and no women; the latter having stopped to comfort the sick.

It was a beautiful moonlight night; and the broad level esplanade upon which the barracks and officers quarters are built in long, low lines of masonry, had a peculiar air of neatness and cleanliness. The men were dismissed to their barrack-rooms, where refreshment was supplied to them from the canteen, and we proceeded to the mess-room.

This occupied the centre of a fine esplanade;

its numerous doors all open to the greensward, giving ready ingress to a well-furnished supper-table, brilliantly lighted, which awaited our presence: and there we brought the labours of the day to a cheerful close, in spite of Major Snubley's old stories about Hurry Punt and Purseram Bhow.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SACRILEGE.

We remained at Poonamalee only long enough to be furnished with tents and other camp equipage; and then got orders to march to Bangalore, about two hundred miles distant, where the regiment lay. Our mess was increased by Dr. Scott, the assistant-surgeon of the Third Native Cavalry; a shrewd fellow and a jolly companion, who was ordered to take us in medical charge: our commissariat and transport department being also duly attended to, and hackeries provided for the women and children, we commenced our march.

I have, on a former occasion, spoken in

praise of a march in England, as a delightful party of pleasure; but I doubt, if it be not greatly surpassed by one in India. The day's journey, for instance, rarely exceeds ten or twelve miles; and this may be performed on horseback, or in a palanquin, according to the state of the exchequer. When we come to our ground, having sent our servants in advance, we find an excellent breakfast laid out, as if by enchantment, in some shady tope, or comfortable choultry by the side of a tank. By the time this has been disposed of, the tents have come up and are pitched: then the careworn subaltern may lie down upon his comfortable couch, to repose after his morning's fatigue. Or, if so disposed, he may throw his gun over his arm, and shoot paddy-birds, or florikens; or, if the country be jungly, he may bag a peacock, an antelope, or a wild boar: making up his mind to the possibility of falling in with an elk or a tiger; in which case, his maty-boy and other attendants will leave him to shift for himself. After this sylvan exercise, he returns to his tent, throws off his clothes, has half-a-dozen chatties of water poured over him; sits down and dresses leisurely, saunters to the mess-tent,

where an excellent dinner awaits him: indulges in its varied enjoyments till the drowsy god asserts his reign, and enables him, by sound repose, undisturbed by guard, or outlying picket, to meet the vicissitudes of the morrow. How often have I compared this playing at soldiers with our long, fatiguing marches in the Peninsula; our sleepless nights in the trenches, our sudden retreats without tents, canteens, or camp-equipage, our lost dinners, and our empty stomachs! And every time I did so, my conscience seemed to reproach me with the enjoyment of my present luxury.

In this manner, we journeyed on for several days, without meeting with any incident worth recording. Croker and I supplied the mess plentifully with all sorts of game, in pursuit of which we wandered over hill and dale: sometimes floundering in paddy-fields, sometimes losing ourselves in the intricacies of the jungle; rarely, however, did it happen that our attendants were not heavily laden with the spoils of the chase, which we freely shared amongst the feminine portion of our nomadic community.

One unlucky day, as Croker called it, for he was insensibly imbibing the superstitions of the people with whom he mingled so familiarly, we had met with little or nothing; and were returning moody and disappointed to camp, with a paddy-bird and a few red-legged partridge only. Our road lay through a Brahmin village, completely embowered amidst the numerous stems and wide-spreading branches of a magnificent banyan-tree. The air of neatness, cleanliness, and calm religious repose that breathed around affected me in an uncommon degree; and I asked myself, why should not happiness be found in such a secluded spot, as well as in all the turmoil and troublesome pursuits of the great world.

There was scarcely a human being to be seen: now and then, perhaps, a graceful female, with majestic step, coming from the bowlie, or village well; with her brazen lota, filled with the sacred fluid, steadily balanced upon her well-formed head. Or else, a venerable sage, reclining in the shade, with a book, composed of strips of the talipot leaf, in his hand, closely written with the stylus: haply containing an episode of the Ramayuna; or that portion

of sacred history, which represents Crishna as opening his divine mouth, and showing therein, to his astonished nurse the universe and all its wondrous glories.

But, few and far between as were the human beings below, the umbrageous foliage above was rife with myriads of its customary denizens. Blue pigeons, in thousands, flew amidst, or floated round the wondrous mass of leaves in eddying circles: while the lazy flying foxes hung in hundreds by the tips of their bat-like wings, from the branches in the dark recesses of the tree; and several distinct races and generations of monkeys played, frisked, and chattered amongst the pillared windings of this gigantic monarch of the vegetable kingdom.

The gambols and antics of these singular animals at first amused me, as I sauntered on before Croker, who was collecting his dogs, and chastising the wild and refractory. As the monkeys scampered away from the Feringhee, I laughed heartily at seeing them tumble over each other: and they returned my laughter with such incessant chattering, and singular gesticulation; so germane, as it were, to the actual posture of affairs, that I could not

help thinking there was some rational foundation for the Monboddo system, after all.

They evidently looked upon me as an intruder on their consecrated ground—an invader of their vested rights: and their indignation was fully evinced, not only in their gestures, but their actions; for they grinned, gnashed their teeth, and pelted me with leaves, branches, and pebbles. There was one old fellow, with a white top-knot, that seemed more virulent in his hostility than all the rest of the gang: his gestures were contemptuous and threatening in the extreme; and the paroxysms of his impotent rage, though they amused me at first, became troublesome in the end; for he followed me from branch to branch, venting his malice in a thousand little ways; till, at last, when he stood at a considerable distance, on one of the topmost branches, I levelled my rifle at his top-knot, and sent a bullet through his head.

Scarcely had he fallen to the earth, when out from cabins, huts, and jungle recesses rushed a multitude of men, women, and children; shouting, yelling, screaming, wringing their hands, tearing their hair, and exhibiting the most unequivocal signs of mingled grief and

horror: while thousands upon thousands of blue pigeons, frightened by the report, fluttered about in all directions; and the flying foxes flitted silently backwards and forwards, like the ghosts of deceased Brahmins at the day of doom.

"Oh, by Jupiter! you have done it now, in earnest, Blake," exclaimed Croker, running up at the disturbance: "we shall have to fight our way back to camp, my boy."

This, indeed, seemed very evident: for an immense crowd of people, heaven knows where they all sprang from in a moment, were closing around us fast; with threatening cries and gestures, eager, apparently, to tear us to pieces. We presented our rifles, and kept them at bay for a while; till one fellow, bolder than the rest, seized mine by the barrel, and endeavoured to wrest it from me. I shook him off in an instant, and gave him a gentle punch with the but-end, in the stomach; when, to my horror and amazement, he fell dead, stone dead, apparently on the ground.

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Croker, "you have now killed a man and a monkey, and we shall have a coroner's inquest, and all the rest of the balderdash."

The sudden death of this fellow multiplied the disturbance tenfold, of course: but it also relieved us from our tormenters; for they all gathered round the fallen wretch, bewailing his untimely fate, and appealing to heaven for vengeance on his murderer. We now got back as fast as we could to the camp: very much agitated, of course, at the dreadful accident, and having no one to consult with as to the consequences; for Major Snubley was enjoying his siesta, and Dr. Scott had ridden off to look at a distant pagoda.

It wasn't long, as we anticipated, ere we beheld an innumerable host of mourners coming in melancholy procession from the Brahmin village towards the camp: one party bearing the dead body of the man on a bamboo frame; and another, the dead body of the monkey;—equally, if not more so, the object of general sympathy and sorrow. They drew up on an open space, in front of the head-quarter tent; and, depositing the two corpses on the ground, they set up such a *phililoo* as awoke the Major in a terrible fright, and attracted every soul in camp to the spot, soldiers, women, children, horse-keepers, grass-cutters, &c. &c.

This appeared to be very consoling to the friends of the deceased; for they set up another tremendous howl, which brought the Major out of his tent in a hurry, rubbing his eyes, and exclaiming,

"Good gracious! what is the matter? Never have I heard such a disturbance since the battle of Seringapatam, when Purseram Bhow cut up the camp followers of Tippoo."

Fifty voices, at least, responded to the Major's question; each, doubtless, with a different version of the affair. But, as he could make neither head nor tail of the matter, he appealed to his dubash, who, being himself a Brahmin, gave him a most awful statement of the case.

"Good gracious, Mr. Blake!" said the Major, pale and trembling; "you have committed murder and sacrilege. If this had happened, Sir, in the camp of Purseram Bhow—"

"It's no such thing," said Croker, stoutly interrupting the Major: "that dubash of yours has been telling you a pack of lies, as I'll prove to his face." Here he stated the whole affair in Hindostanee, in which, and some of the country dialects, he had great fluency; appeal-

ing to the crowd, as he went on, for the truth of his assertions.

"But, Sir," said the Major, "I must believe the evidence of my own eyes: there lies the dead monkey."

"Well," responded Croker, "'tis only a monkey after all, and make the most of it: my friend is willing to pay a handsome fine for shooting him."

"But he has committed a sacrilege, Sir," cried the Major: "that monkey, perhaps, contained the transmigrated soul of the god Hanoomaun."

"That's all balderdash!" returned Croker.

"Sir," said the Major, "I look upon the Hindoo system of mythology as the most ancient and mysterious doctrine in the universe; comprising as it does the metempsychosis, or trans——"

"Oh, Jupiter!" said Croker, "you're always looking into the dictionary, for big words to bother us."

"And sure I am," continued the Major, "that Purseram Bhow, in all his glory, wouldn't dare commit such an act as this."

"That may be," said Croker; "but he was only a black rascal after all.'"

"Then you are of opinion," said the Major, "that white people are at liberty to shoot men and monkeys whenever they please?"

"I am of opinion," said Croker, "that this black rascal deserved his death, for he first seized upon Blake's gun; and, after all, the punch he got of the but-end wouldn't kill a mosquito."

Here the multitude raised another dismal howl; after which, the principal Brahmin declared his intention of sitting *dhurna* on the Major, until he got satisfaction for the murder and sacrilege committed that day in his village.

Accordingly, at a sign from this very astute personage, the multitude squatted themselves down before the door of the Major's tent; and the chief Brahmin, drawing a dagger, declared his resolution to stab himself if the Major ventured to step beyond this sacred cordon.

"Good gracious, Mr. Blake!" said the poor Major; "you see what a predicament you have brought me into! But perhaps I should

explain to you the meaning of this awful ceremony——"

"It's all balderdash," interrupted Croker.

"'Tis no such thing, Sir," replied the Major, "but a very sacred and mysterious rite, by which an injured person seeks to obtain justice; for which purpose, he places himself at the door of the person from whom he seeks redress—mine, for instance—and threatens to poison or stab himself, if that person issue from that doorway till he is satisfied."

"Then, cut a hole in the kanauts," said Croker; "and go out by that."

"Even that is provided against," said the Major; "for, as you see, the Brahmin's attendants have drawn a cordon round the whole tent; and I must either starve here, or cause the death of the venerable priest, by violating the sanctity of his *dhurna*."

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Croker, "such flummery as that won't do for an English stomach."

"'Tis not flummery, Sir," retorted the Major; "for I recollect when Hurry Punt, who was himself a high-caste Brahmin—I must explain to you, Mr. Blake, that Punt is an abbreviation

of Pundit; a doctor, or, I should rather say, doctissimus, most learned in the law——"

Here Dr. Scott galloped into the camp from his excursion, and hastened to the spot, very much astonished at the state of affairs.

"As for you, Mr. Blake," continued the Major, "it will be my painful duty to send you back to Madras, under arrest, to take your trial for this murder."

"Murder!" exclaimed Dr. Scott. "Who has he murdered?"

I told the Doctor, with whom I was an especial favourite, how the whole affair had arisen.

"But are you sure the man is dead?" demanded the Doctor. "Let me feel his pulse."

"No, no, no!" shouted the multitude, crowding around the dead body; "the murdered man is a Brahmin, and the Doctor is a Pariah. Impossible for a Pariah to touch a Brahmin."

The Doctor smiled significantly; and, addressing the people in their own dialect, asked if they would like to see the murdered man restored to life.

"Certainly," they replied, "if such a thing were possible."

"Then," said the Doctor, "I undertake to work this miracle for you. You all know what wonders an English doctor can perform."

"Yes, yes, yes, we standy," every one exclaimed. "Feringhee doctor like one god."

"But you musn't dare to touch the body," said the chief Brahmin.

"Certainly not," replied the Doctor.

"Neither with hand, knife, stick, or lancet," continued the Brahmin.

"Very well," said the Doctor; "I agree to all your terms; I'll merely stand by his side during the magical operation."

There was a good deal of whispering, and anxious deliberation amongst the crowd, while the Doctor went into his tent for a moment; and on his return, the principals among them stood closely on the watch to prevent him from touching the body. We drew nigh also, eager to witness a result in which we were so deeply interested; the soldiers, women, and children, crowded after us, and all hung forward in breathless suspense to witness the stupendous miracle of raising the dead.

The murdered man was lying on his back upon the ground, perfectly naked, all but his

cummerband and turban. His body was motionless and already stiff; there was no breathing, no apparent pulsation, nothing whatever to indicate that the soul had not taken its flight from the senseless mass of clay that lay before us; and yet there was a look of confidence about the Doctor, that I could not at all account for.

The latter now took his station by the side of the dead body; and, standing upright, gazed around with a glance full of mystic meaning. He then drew from his pocket a small phosphorous bottle, at that time a recent invention, with a match, and a stick of sealing-wax. Waving these *instrumenta magica* backwards and forwards, he elevated his voice, and chaunted forth, in a solemn and sonorous tone, the national anthem of "God save the King!"

At the end of this stanza, which produced an evident effect on the nerves of the multitude, the Doctor plunged the match into the phosphorous bottle; and, applying it to the sealing wax, three burning drops fell in rapid succession on the naked stomach of the defunct.

Up sprang the wretch with a yell that would have frightened a whole prairie of wild

bulls; and off he ran, shouting "murder! murder! Apa Samee! Apa Samee!" in a voice of intense agony.

Off set Croker, also, with his dog-whip; and laying it into the fugitive with right good will, as he roared and ran, he gave the impostor a memento of British vengeance both before and behind. Dhurna was broke up with astonishing celerity; and the innocent Brahmins and Brahminees scuttled off, being pelted with stones out of the camp, by the women and children; while Major Snubley declared that he had never witnessed such a piece of deception since the wonderful days of Purseram Bhow.

CHAPTER X.

THE PETTICOAT MUTINY.

For some days after this startling event, we bowled along over the level and uninteresting plains of the Carnatic, without the occurrence of any incident worth mentioning. In this period, we passed Arcot, then a cavalry station, and once celebrated for the glorious defence of an old ricketty fort by Clive; who, with two or three hundred Sepoys, kept ten thousand of Chunda Sahib's troops at bay for sixty days; and finally beat them off, at a critical moment, for the glory and stability of the British empire in India. We also passed by Vellore, a fortress rendered famous by an equally gallant exploit

of one of our modern heroes, Gillespie; whose lamentable fall, when leading a desperate assault on Kalunga, in Nepaul, deprived the British empire of a star of the first magnitude.

Now, whether it was the memory of these glorious events, or some other equally martial *souvenirs*, I cannot venture to say; but certain it is, that a most pugnacious spirit began to evince itself, about this time, amongst a portion of our detachment, which the gentle reader will the least suspect of such a propensity. The petticoats in short, were in a state of commotion: the women and children, to the number of two hundred, were in open and most flagrant mutiny, which came to a head, and exploded two days' march beyond Vellore.

As usual, nobody suspected anything of the matter. We all slept soundly in peace and quietness till about two o'clock in the morning; when the bugle having sounded, and the soldiers' tents being struck, the sergeant-major entered the commandant's marquee, and duly reported that the women and children, one and all, had refused to march.

"Pooh! pooh!" exclaimed Major Snubley "they are not awake yet, I suppose."

"They are wide awake, Sir," said the Adjutant's deputy.

"Are they mad or drunk, then?" demanded the Major, petulantly.

"Drunk they are not, Sir," was the reply; "but mad they certainly may be."

"The dog-star rages!" exclaimed the Major, as he got out of bed, and fumbled on his clothes in the dark.

"The stars are all down, Sir," said the chief of the non-commissioned; "but it will soon be daylight."

"Now," resumed the Major, half soliloquizing, "what would Purseram Bhow do on such an occasion as this?—I know—I have it—strike their tents, to be sure, and then the jades must either march, or get a *coup de soleil.*"

"We have tried that, Sir," replied the Sergeant-Major; "but they have beaten off the lascars."

"Ho, Sahib," said the *maistry* of the tent-pitchers, sidling into the marquee. "One devil woman break my head with a mallet."

"And anoder knock me down with a tent-peg," cried his deputy.

Eight or ten lascars now pushed their way into the Major's presence, each complaining of some outrage or other.

"Are the men under arms, Sergeant-Major?" demanded the Commandant, in a voice of stern authority.

"They are, Sir," replied the Sergeant-Major, "and there isn't a tent-pole standing in the whole camp, except the women's."

"Then, pile arms," said the Commandant, "and march the men off in squads to strike the jades' tents, whether they will or no."

The Sergeant-Major having made the usual salute, retired to obey his orders; and the Commandant continued his toilette, soliloquizing every now and then as he proceeded, on the dogged and stubborn nature of the European, particularly the English female, as compared with the gentle pliability of the Asiatic: but expressing his resolution to carry matters with a high hand on such an occasion as the present; when an example of insubordination was set, so fatal to the discipline of the British army, and which Purseram Bhow would deal with in the most summary manner.

Here the Major's soliloquy was interrupted

by an immense shout from the women's tents, which were always pitched by themselves at a certain distance from the men's; but the shout was of so dubious a character, that the Major could not exactly make out whether it was one of defiance or of victory. It was, in fact, a mingled mass of sounds, screams, cries, groans, and laughter, such as probably never awoke the echoes of that locality before or since.

"What on earth is the meaning of this uproar?" demanded the astonished Snubley.

"'Tis the women again, Sir," replied the Sergeant-Major, rushing in: "they have tripped up the men with the tent-ropes, in the dark, and they are tying them neck and heels with their apron-strings."

"Impossible, Sir!" cried the Commandant, pale with ire. "English soldiers would never suffer themselves to be so treated by a parcel of drunken beldames."

"However that may be, Sir," replied the Sergeant-Major, "there they are, tumbling over one another in the dark, and not a tent struck, nor likely to be."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Snubley. "Where on earth is Lieutenant Croker?

He's always out of the way when I want him. Off in the jungle, I suppose, shooting wild boars, or boa-constrictors."

"I'll go and look for him, Sir," said the Sergeant-Major, rushing out.

Croker and I, with shame I must acknowledge, were enjoying the fun at a little distance, utterly regardless of the Major's quandary; when an orderly stumbled upon us, in the dark, and summoned Croker to head-quarters.

"By Jupiter! then," exclaimed Croker, as he went off laughing, "I'll tell him the whole secret of the matter."

I followed to witness this interesting *éclaircissement*, and took post at the door of the Major's tent.

"Oh, you are come at last, Sir!" cried Snubley, with an explosion of pent-up wrath.

"I came the moment you sent for me, Major," replied Croker. "I couldn't think of intruding before, under the circumstances."

"Oh, I know what you mean, Sir," said the Major, "by laying such an emphasis on the word 'circumstances.' Of that, more hereafter; but I now demand of you the meaning

of this uproar, which, I shame to say, may be heard above the Ghauts."

"Well, then," replied Croker, "if you must know the truth, 'tis all along of Zuleikha Beebee."

"What dat you say, Croke Sahib?" demanded a shrill voice, as a female head was protruded from behind a curtain that hung at one end of the marquee.

"I say, 'tis all along of you, Beebee Zuleikha," repeated Croker. "The women swear they won't have you for a commanding officer any longer."

"You mind your eye, Croke Sahib!" cried the lady, in a passion. "I give you de slipper in your head."

Here, an angry and discordant trio ensued, in which all spoke together, and in double alt. But, as the reader could learn nothing from such a galimatias, I must play Chorus on the occasion, and unravel the mystery for him.

It appears, then, that Major Snubley, when we commenced this unpropitious march, had invited and prevailed upon a Mussulman lady, of some personal attractions, to travel to Bangalore under his protection. This fair being,

without a soul, whose name, like that of Potiphar's wife, was Zuleikha, embalmed in the lyric verse of Hafiz, was somewhat portly in person, with large gazelle eyes, whose apparent magnitude was still further increased by the application of Kohol round the lids; while her teeth were duly blackened and polished, and her lips, fingers, and toes, died with henna. She was, as I have said, somewhat portly in person; and, as she walked, according to the recommendation of Eastern poets, with the stately majesty of the elephant, or the phenicopteros, she set jingling, at every step she took, about a hundred and fifty little bells, and silver trinkets, distributed over various parts of her person; her ears carrying five distinct tiers of ornaments, and her nose-ring being as large in circumference, as the hoop of an oyster barrel.

This delectable creature travelled in a very handsome hackery, drawn by two snow-white Brahminy bulls, with magnificent humps. The canopy of this four-sided carriage, on two wheels, was composed of rich damask, with a gilt ball on the top. It was supported by four silver-plated pillars, between which green silk curtains being extended, shaded from the vulgar

gaze, and the sun's rude assaults, the charming occupant, who sat cross-legged within.

So distinguished a personage, travelling, moreover, with all the prestige of the commandant's lady, could, of course, occupy only one position in the line of march: this was at the head of the long, long column of hackeries, bandies, bullocks, and camp followers, that brought up the rear of the fighting-men; who, like the army of Xerxes, numbered only one-tenth of the sum total. This pre-eminence was submitted to quietly enough, for some time, by the soldiers' wives; till the demon of discord began to hint amongst them, that it was highly derogatory for Englishwomen, Christian women, aye, and honest women to boot, to follow, like so many menials, in the train of a black, or, at least, a brown pagan of the feminine gender; who was, moreover, and above all, no better than she ought to be.

No sooner was this idea once broached, than it took like wild-fire; and the only wonder now was, that the degradation had been brooked so long. At first, the discontented matrons thought of gaining their point by an expedient of their own, and endeavoured to circumvent

the enemy by getting before her on the line of march; but Zuleikha Beebee was wide awake to the perils that beset her dignity, and was always half an hour before them at the post of honor. Foiled in this attempt, they next had recourse to hints, inuendoes, invectives, and downright insults; but, ensconced behind her green silk curtains, Zuleikha Beebee was impenetrable to their attacks, and regardless of the pressure from without. Driven at last to desperation, the British fair ones mutually vowed to support each other in a struggle for their rights; and, declaring war, *à l'outrance*, the scene above described was the glorious result.

"To cut this matter short," exclaimed Major Snubley, at the end of a stormy debate, "I order you, Lieutenant Croker, to go and quell this disturbance, and I place the whole detachment in your hands for that purpose. Lieutenant Blake, you'll stay with me, as a guard of honour, in case the wretches should attack my person."

"But don't you think now, Zuleikha Beebee," said Croker, in a soothing voice, "that if you would only be so kind as to go a little in the rear of the line—"

"Bah! bah!" interrupted the lady, stamping her elephantine leg upon the ground, with a degree of energy that set all her trinkets tinkling, like the bells of the Chinese porcelain tower in a squall. "You no tink I do dat business, Croke Sahib?"

"Only for a day," insinuated Croker; "just to pacify them for the moment."

"No, nor for tree day," replied the lady; "nor for one week, nor for twelve year. No proper business for Mussulmaun Beebee to ride after Dobee women."

"But English woman say," persisted Croker; "Not proper business for Moor woman go first; Sepoy always go last in line of march."

"More fool he!" replied Zuleikha; "but dat not my fashion. I always cock-o-de-walk. When I travel wid Captain-ee-Smith, of Nizam army, I always ride him elephant, and nobody say, bo! you goose!"

"You see how it is," said poor Snubley, shrugging his shoulders. "She won't yield, and I cannot blame her."

"I should tink not," said the lady. "If you do, you one old fool, Captain-ee-Smith was de proper man; he soon blow 'em up."

"And so would Purseram Bhow," cried Snubley. "And so will I: but, first of all, Croker, you go, my dear fellow, and see if you can settle the matter peaceably for us."

Croker went accordingly; and, as he strode along, his tall, gaunt figure, cast a shadow of portentuous length, for it was now broad daylight, and the sun was showing his fiery disc above the horizon.

With all the anxiety of our Vienna diplomatists, awaiting the ultimatum of a truculent bully, who feels, or fancies, he has the game in his hands, Major Snubley, and I awaited the return of our envoy: nor were we kept long in suspense; for, after another shout of scorn and defiance, we beheld Croker flying from the triumphant foe, holding his handkerchief to his face. In another moment, he was in the tent, displaying to our horrified gaze his visage streaming with blood, that issued from ten distinct furrows, dug into his features by the nails of some mutinous fury.

"By Jupiter! now, Major Snubley," exclaimed Croker, "you only say the word, and I'll fight any ten black fellows that ever were pupped;

but I'll be sniggered if ever I go near those devils of women again."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Zuleikha. "You put Dobee women before me! See what dey give you, now, for tanks!"

"'Tis six of one, and half a dozen of another," retorted Croker. "You're all the same sort of cattle."

"You call me one cattle!" cried Zuleikha, springing forward; and, snatching off her slipper with wonderful dexterity, she gave poor Croker such a smack of it on the lips, as drew forth some more of his heroic blood.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Snubley, "what on earth am I to do amongst you all? Never was any one so beset as I am, since the days of Purseram Bhow."

"You one foolish old man," said Zuleikha. "Captain-ee-Smith was de proper fellow for dat business: he soon settle de hash of 'em."

"So can I too," said the commandant proudly; "but we must first try the effect of diplomacy and tactic. Stay—I have it—we'll starve the jades: they're too well fed, that's the fact of it. Sergeant-major, order the *cornico-*

*pola** to go forward a day in advance: we will then march, and leave the nasty sluts to starve behind us. Hunger will soon bring them to their senses," said Snubley, rubbing his hands in high glee at the idea.

"They're beforehand with us there, Sir," replied the Sergeant-major. "They have got the *cornicopola* a prisoner in their tents, and swear they'll brain him, if he attempts to escape."

"But his people," said the commandant, "can move on with the cattle."

"I have tried that, also," said the Sergeant-major, "but they won't budge a foot without him."

"Good gracious! I'm at my wits' ends," cried poor Snubley, wringing his hands, and looking the very picture of despair. "Blake, my dear fellow, you go and try what effect you can produce. Palaver them, my dear boy; promise them every thing—"

"No, no!" cried Zuleikha; "not every ting, you old fuzool!"

* The meat-contractor, who always accompanies troops to the field, with droves of cattle and flocks of sheep.

"I meant to say, everything but that," resumed the poor major, drawing in his horns.

I accordingly set off on my mission, but with very little hopes of success. Warned, however, by Croker's mishap, I resolved to try the soothing system; and approached the enemy's position with smiling looks, waving a white cambric handkerchief as a symbol of peace.

I was greatly amused, as I drew nigh, at the military aspect of affairs. The women's camp occupied a slightly elevated ground; and the tents, twelve in number, were pitched close together, in a solid square of cotton, the tent-ropes being so interlaced and intermingled, as to defy the ingress of all but the most practised of *clashies*. In the centre, was elevated a tall bamboo, from the summit of which a petticoat fluttered in the breeze. Quarter and rear-guards were established, and sentries marched backwards and forwards, with mops and broomsticks over their shoulders; while a battery of pails and buckets, filled with water, by no means deodorized, stood ready for immediate action, and the young fry scampered about as scouts, to give timely notice of the proceedings of the enemy.

A deputation of a dozen of the most staid and elderly matrons, came forward to receive my communication, and I addressed them in my most fascinating manner.

"My dear, good, worthy souls," I began.

But this exordium was received with a stunning peal of laughter, which interposed an obstacle *in limine*, as the logicians say, that I could not get over; and I stood for a moment or two, stammering and unable to proceed: at length,

"Why don't you go on?" cried one.

"There's a hole in his ballad," said another.

"I never saw a bashful Irishman before," said a third.

"You're a pretty fellow for a Tipperary boy," said a fourth.

"He's Cork, darlint," said a fifth. "Don't you see he has kissed the Blarney-stone."

"I'll engage," said a sixth, he's got a big lump of it in his pocket."

"I say, young man," cried a lady from Westminster; "does your mother know you're out?"

"Give her my compliments, when you write,"

said another, "and ask her, has she sold her mangle?"

Much more of this chaffing I underwent; till one huge matron, with a mob cap flapping about her ears, that made her look like Abd-el-Kader, as that gallant chieftain is represented in our print shops, exclaimed:

"Be off wid you now, Paddy Blake, or I'll mark your baby-face as I did that gomeril Croker's."

Totally abashed by this shower of threats and witticisms, I was about to retire, looking very sheepish, I confess; when the whole pack of them surrounded me, in three distinct circles of young and old, hand in hand; dancing with more energy than grace to the old nursery rhyme, which was most provokingly appropriate to the occasion:

> "Rings on her fingers, bells on her toes,
> She will have music wherever she goes!"

The kind reader will, I hope, pardon my vanity; but, in the excitement of the moment, I could not help comparing myself to Orpheus about to be sacrificed to the fury of the Thracian matrons. I escaped, however,

the fright; for, after indulging some time in their Saturnalia, they opened out, and allowed me to retire, as the saying is, with my finger in my mouth; contenting themselves with pinning a rag to my coat-skirts; and, all unconscious of the honor, I marched back through the camp and into the head-quarter marquee, with this respectable appendage dangling at my tail.

Matters were now proceeding from bad to worse; and the Major began to anticipate serious consequences to himself, if the mutiny was not immediately checked. The women, however, positively refused to stir, if the Beebee was not sent to her proper place at the end of the column of hackeries; and the Beebee, with a stupendous polyglot oath, declared she would not relinquish the post of honor. In this dilemma, there was but one alternative,—to send Zuleikha back to Madras, till happier times: and the Major, having screwed his courage to the sticking place, imparted the sad news to her; which produced a terrible scene of tears, faintings, hysterics, and invectives. She declared, however, that she couldn't think of going by herself, there being plenty of robbers

on the road to take her trinkets from her, and perhaps her life—Thuggism being then very common. Upon this the Major ordered his dubash to attend her, but Ram Samee flatly refused the office: he was no *Burwah*, he said, but a high-caste Brahmin, and it was not proper business for him to do. Indignant at this refusal, the Major discharged his dubash; and Zuleikha was prevailed on by a very handsome present, to venture her precious person alone on the journey.

These arrangements being made, all obstacles were at length obviated; the women got into their hackeries, their tents were struck and sent forward, and though the sun was already high in the heavens, we commenced our march.

"Halt! halt!" cried the Major, before we had proceeded fifty paces on our way. "Mr. Croker, countermarch the detachment; here is another confounded piece of business!"

We accordingly took up our former position, and began to think ourselves spell-bound to the spot.

The Major, it seems, had no sooner got into his palanquin, than he found there wasn't a

humaul to carry him: they had all gone off with Ram Samee. Poor Snubley, in this predicament, ordered his horse to be saddled; but there was neither a ghorawallah nor a grass-cutter to be found. His maty-boy had also vanished, together with his gardener, his hookah-burdar, his doby-walla, his lascars;—all, in short, having been hired by the dubash, went away with him, and left the real master on the camp-field, alone with his glory!

This being a predicament which admitted of no possible remedy save one, we had all to hunt about for the wily Brahmin; who, after putting our patience to a severe test, at length suffered himself to be found, and was reinstated in his former functions. All difficulties being thus obviated, we finally left this unlucky camp, the triumphant dubash remarking with a sly leer:

"Good ting master come to him senses. Spose Major Sahib not know when good servant got, Ram Samee know when got good master."

A few days after this, we ascended the Pednadurgum Pass, one of those stupendous

defiles that lead to the table-land of India; and another week's march brought us, without further adventures, to the cantonment of Bangalore.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CANTONMENT.

A cantonment in India is altogether so different from our military establishments in Europe, that the reader will, perhaps, be gratified with a brief sketch of Bangalore, which will give him an adequate idea of all the others.

The European infantry barracks, the centre, or nucleus of this cantonment, stand on a level plain, spacious enough for the manœuvres of four thousand men. These barracks form a great quadrangle of large airy rooms, one story high, with verandahs facing inwards; capable of lodging fifteen hundred men, exclusive of officers whose quarters are elsewhere.

At some distance in rear of these barracks stands a great bazaar or market; and in front of them on the opposite side of a vast esplanade, or parade ground, extend the officers' bungalows ranged in rows, intersected by streets or roads, running in parallel and perpendicular lines. Each bungalow stands within a spacious compound, or garden, laid out in parterres: these are planted with fruit trees and flowering shrubs, and separated from the contiguous compounds by hedges of milk-bush, cactus, and bamboo, or other vegetable production of rapid growth, and impervious nature, peculiar to the climate.

To the right and left of the infantry barracks before mentioned, extend the bungalows of the Company's officers; together with the lines of the native cavalry and infantry regiments, situated amongst topes of cocoa-nut and other trees, where the Sepoys and their families live in clay-built huts, constructed either by themselves or their predecessors. At a little distance to the eastward, but within the cantonment lines, are spacious barracks for a European light dragoon regiment, surrounded in like manner by the officers' bungalows; and beyond these extends a fine level race-

course, forming part of an arid and uncultivated plain many square miles in extent.

After our long march through a wild, and, in many places, a desert country, the verdant and highly improved aspect of Bangalore was extremely refreshing to us; and gave us a foretaste of those pleasures which it is always in the power of large congregated masses of troops to command. We marched in with all the honours, the splendid band of my new regiment playing before us; while a number of the officers, who had come out to meet us, pranced and caracolled their beautiful Arab and Coorg horses around in all directions, determined, as it were, to "witch" the Griffins with "noble horsemanship."

I must pass over the warm greetings between the fair part of our detachment and their husbands, sons, and brothers, who all flocked out to receive them after so long a separation; in order to mention that my own reception by my new associates was of that warm and brotherly character which is no where to be met with but in the army.

Several of them contended for the pleasure, as they were good enough to call it, of giving

me a share of their quarters; and at last I accepted the hospitality of two young fellows, for they generally went in couples, whose bungalow was sufficiently capacious to accommodate an additional tenant. There, after a pleasant bath, and an excellent breakfast, I sat for some time smoking my hookah; surrounded by fresh squads in succession, all being anxious to have a chat with one so recently from the Peninsula: and before the day was out, the name of Percy Blake was as familiar in the mouths of these Orientals, as ever it had been with the old Apple-greens, or the Light Brigade.

Croker, who had taken up his quarters with an old chum, having called for me about eleven, we went to pay our respects to the Colonel, whom I had not yet seen.

"By Jupiter, Percy," said this original, as he stalked onwards throwing his long limbs in all directions, "you're such a tight-built fellow that the Colonel will fall in love with you immediately."

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Oh! you'll see fast enough," said Croker, with a chuckle; "but I don't think

you'll wear that battalion epaulette much longer."

We entered the compound of Lieutenant-Colonel McClish, which displayed all the neatness and precision of an old bachelor. It was situated on the esplanade, within view of the barracks, and was laid out with great taste and beauty; abounding in every species of ornamental vegetable in which the East is so prolific: while the guava, the plantain, the pomegranate, the custard-apple, and many other fruit trees of small size and dimensions, all in full bearing, offered their tempting products to the passing stranger. The bungalow was a perfect epitome of Eastern luxury and comfort. It all lay on the ground-floor, and was covered with a heavy thatch; which, though it harbours snakes and other reptiles, is best calculated for repelling the intense heat. The rooms were shaded from the sun by broad verandahs, whose pillars were enwreathed with a variety of beautiful creepers; while the walls and floors were covered with white chunam, polished with all the brilliancy of Parian marble; and a handsome punkah in the central, or sitting apartment, spread a delicious breeze through the whole.

"'Tis all very nice," said Croker, observing my admiration; "but 'tis all for his own and sole enjoyment. He's a niggardly, selfish old hunks, that has never even given so much as a regimental tiffin."

We found the Colonel and the Adjutant walking to and fro in one of the verandahs, and I was presented in due form; having to all appearance, as Croker prophecied, made a very favourable impression.

My new commandant was a small, spare, weazen-faced man; with a foxy wig and little ferret eyes, expressive of cold distrust and selfish cunning. After the customary salutations, rendered on his part in a sharp Scottish accent, he honoured me with a particular scrutiny; as he would a young horse he was about to purchase, exclaiming at length aside to the Adjutant:

"'Gad Ameety! he'll do, I'm thinking. He's quite a Polly Belvedero. Tell me, Sir, have you ever been a Light Bob, eh?"

"I have never been anything else, Colonel," was my reply.

"'Gad Ameety! I thocht so," he resumed. "Show me your leg, Sir, show me your leg."

I stretched out my leg accordingly, but this was not enough.

"Tighten your troosers, Sir, aboot the knee-pan," cried this original critic of fine forms; "let me see the atomy of your limb, Sir. The kilt, noo, wad be the thing; but these trews, or troosers, as ye ca' 'em, are a great construction to the ee-seet, and that's a fac'."

Having complied with the colonel's wish in this particular, he exclaimed:

"That'll do, Sir! ye'll do mon! ye're as clean built as a Highlandman; that's a fac. Hoo tall may ye be? I'll wager, five feet nine, or thereaboot—the vara thing. Can ye jump, sir? Can ye rin? Can ye put the stone, and pitch the bar?"

I satisfied the Colonel on one of these points, at least, by jumping backwards and forwards over his palanquin, which stood before the verandah.

"That'll do, Sir," cried the Colonel, in high glee. "Gad Ameety, mon, but ye're a clipper, and that's a fac. Mr. Standish (turning to the adjutant) post Mr. Blake to the Light Company, Sir. And hear to me, Mr. Blake, get yourself wings, Sir, and a sabre, and all the

other paraphersalia of a Light Bob. Gad Ameety, mon! ye maunna be stookit down amang the flat feet; that's a fac."

I made my acknowledgments to the Colonel, and told him that he had crowned the summit of my ambition.

"Vara weel, Sir, vara weel," replied the Colonel. "Ye ken right weel hoo to acknowledge an obligation, Sir; that's a fac. Ye hae been weel brocht up, Sir. Hae ye been in fashionable life, Sir? Hae ye seen much o' Lunun?"

"A good deal, sir," I replied, "in the intervals of service."

"Ah! that's the place to gang tull," said the Colonel, "for Boto and Bomunday. But, a mon must hae plenty o' siller in his poke; that's a fac. Nae mon can gang to Lunun withoot."

"But what are poor fellows to do, Colonel, who have no money in their pockets," demanded Croker.

"Let them grin and bear it, Sir," replied the Colonel, with a frown at their presumption; "let them grin, and bear it. Sic like folk should stay at hame, and roast their shins at the fire. Ha! ha! ha! that's a fac."

The Adjutant, Croker, and I, having, as in duty bound, echoed the Colonel's laugh, the great man became facetious on the strength of his witticism.

"An hoos a' wi' ye, Meester Croker?" he exclaimed, with a gracious smile. Gad Ameety, mon! but ye're ganging up tull the vara sennit, ye're sae tall mon."

"I hope I'll do for the grenadiers now, Colonel," said Croker.

"Ae mon, that's anither affair," said the Colonel, with a sudden chill on his facetious mood. "Ye're sae ungainly, sir, with thae legs and arms. Gad Ameety! ye look like twa halberts badly tied togither; and that's a fac. But, what the deil's the matter wi' your face, mon? Hae ye had a young teeger aboot y'ere lugs in the jungle, eh?"

Here Croker gave the Colonel an account of the mutiny; touching, however, very delicately on the cause of it.

"The rampaging wild beasts!" cried the Colonel, in a passion. "See if I don't give 'em a quid for a quod. An sae the puir Major was obleeged to part with his Sherrymee; and to travel *soleas cum soleas*, like the fellow that

lost his wife at the siege of Troy. But, here he comes, and I must quizzify him a leetle on the fox's pass he made with that *bony roby*. Good morning to ye gentlemen: we shall meet again at dinner. *Ory vory*, as we say in France."

We accordingly made our bow and retired.

"He has made a Light Bob of you," said Croker, with a grin. "That cost him nothing; but he'd see you at Jericho before he offered you a glass of sangaree, or a slice of water-melon."

From the residence of Colonel McClish, Croker and I sauntered down to the mess-room, where we had an excellent tiffin with a large party of the prime spirits of the cantonment; King's, Company's and Civilians: for, in this last category, we had some young fellows enjoying situations in the vicinity, as collectors, jungle-judges, &c., of two or three thousand a-year, whose incomes a few months before did not amount to as many farthings. Tiffin was succeeded by billiards, quoits, blind-hookey, and other games that did not require much exertion, till parade time; when having gone through the ceremony of falling in and out, I was well

mounted by a brother officer, and we had a gallop on the race-course till eight o'clock, when we rode home to dinner.

This meal, in India, though abundant and luxurious, is but sparingly partaken of in general; the appetite being sufficiently satisfied at tiffin, to which all sit down in white jackets, and unrestrained conviviality: but the *après diner*, with the incentives of delicious fruit, excellent wines, and agreeable chat, is frequently prolonged to the small hours. At five o'clock the following morning, we were under arms again, and manœuvred on the race-course, in brigade, till nine; when a good substantial breakfast awaited us at our respective bungalows. Such, with the occasional intervention of guards, Courts Martial, and Courts of Inquiry, was the ordinary routine of our life at Bangalore.

Though life in India is sufficiently monotonous, for want of those varied and abundant materials which make up the sum of European society, we exerted ourselves with tolerable success at Bangalore to push old Time gaily on his course. The ladies of the cantonment were not very numerous, but they were sociable;

and, with their assistance and co-operation, we got up a succession of balls, concerts, pic nics, and equestrian excursions, which greatly enhanced the general enjoyment. Nay, we built a theatre, of which I was nominated architect, manager, and poet in ordinary. From amongst the privates and non-commissioned officers of my regiment, I selected a very respectable *corps dramatique;* half-a-dozen young drummers, and band-boys, being drilled to perform the female characters. After overcoming a thousand and one obstacles, we commenced a very prosperous season with the comedy of "John Bull," and the farce of "Raising the Wind;" the house being crowded to the ceiling by an enraptured audience, and an opening address from my pen, received with unbounded applause.

Then we had excellent races, and abundance of shooting in the neighbouring jungle; which extends for miles and miles round Savindroog, and several other hill forts that lie between Bangalore and Seringapatam. The Rajah of Mysore, also, our interesting *protégé;* who, on the fall of Tippoo, had been raised to the musnud, by the arms of Great Britain, from the humble position of a chatty-maker, having

visited our cantonment, ordered a splendid race-stand and racket-court to be built for us; and occasionally sent us half-a-dozen tigers in trap-cages, to be hunted on the race-course. At this amusement I became very expert: there were few, even amongst our Light Dragoon and Native Cavalry regiments, that could spear a tiger with greater dexterity than Percy Blake; and no one ever drew forth more rapturous applause from the fashionable occupants of the race-stand.

Then, again, when any fair dame was in want of a beau or an escort, the dashing young Light Bob, who kept his brace of Arabs, and rode and won his own races, was the chosen *preux*. In all matters of amusement, in all points of taste, he was the general umpire: in short, nothing could be done without Percy Blake; whether the object was the building of a ball-room, the arrangement of a gorgeous entertainment, or a mere shopping excursion to the godown of Peter Boxley.

This worthy, a little punchy half-cast, had taken up an excellent position in the very centre of our lines: there, a spacious compound having been allotted to him, for the general con-

venience, he had built a vast godown, or warehouse, and stocked it well with every imaginable article of European or Chinese manufacture; which he renewed and refreshed on the arrival of every fleet at Madras.

In this grand emporium might be seen and obtained, on short notice and long credit, all manner of creature comforts; hams, tongues, Bengal humps, Colchester oysters, caviare from the Mediterranean, edible bird's nests from the land of Confucius, wines, brandies, Hollands and double stout; all mixed up and mingled with hats, caps, coats, shoes, boots, and stockings: every article of ladies' finery, from a hair-pin to a casket of jewels; and everything belonging to the masculine gender, from a shoe-tie to a general's aiguelette. Never did mortal eye look upon so miscellaneous an assortment; never did the fancy rove, pleased and bewildered, amidst such a profusion of tempting objects; where the blind goddess seemed to have emptied her cornucopia at the feet of her joyous and reckless worshippers.

Thither was Percy Blake invariably summoned by his fair adherents, on the arrival of every new fleet at Madras: and as, at that

period, we were in the midst of a tremendous European war, when ships never ventured to sea without convoy; and when, moreover, free-trade had not been so much as dreamt of, these events were few and far between; our means of obtaining fresh supplies being limited to the periodical advent of the Company's fleets. This, of course, increased the eagerness with which every one rushed to Peter Boxley's, the moment he announced the opening of his goods: and for several days his godown was crammed to suffocation; ladies and gentlemen jostling and struggling with each other, in a manner that never was surpassed any where but at the Free-Trade Bazaar in Covent Garden Theatre, which my readers have doubtless not yet forgotten.

Then might be heard the silver sound of female voices in accents such as these:—"Mr. Blake, how do you like this?" "Dear Mr. Blake, don't you admire that?" intermingled with the rougher sounds of "I say, Percy Blake, my wife is dying to have your opinion of a crape shawl;" or "Blake, Sahib, Colonel lady want speak you five minutes—only five minutes, Sahib." In short, if in-

cessant activity and universal consideration could constitute happiness, I might at this period be set down as the happiest fellow in India.

CHAPTER XII.

MY NEIGHBOUR'S WIFE.

But, alas! there was a thorn in my breast that embittered all this enjoyment; and the reader, perhaps, anticipates its nature, if he has not already begun to accuse me of heartless insensibility, and a recreant forgetfulness of the first devoir of every accomplished cavalier.

I had written repeatedly to Julia; addressing my letters under cover to her uncle, being unacquainted with her address, or with any better mode of transit; but I had never received a single line in return. None of my letters, however, were sent back, from which I concluded that they must have reached their

destination; and the silence with which they were treated, induced a bitter suspicion that Julia was unfaithful to her vows. The agony occasioned by this thought was at first so overwhelming, that for many days, I gave myself up to despair, and secluded myself altogether from society. Time, though it blunted the edge of my affliction, failed, however, to restore the serenity of my mind. I became moping and melancholy; gave up my former pursuits, and retired from the busy scene in which I had long played so distinguished a part: as a natural consequence, I was superseded in the world of fashion, by one who was more zealous in its service, and more willing to minister to its wants and wishes.

It being generally considered that my secession was occasioned by a total failure of pecuniary resources, which in India is held to be the only legitimate and irremediable cause of unhappiness; I was speedily tabooed by the proud, the selfish, and the unfeeling: and all who know the world will admit that these constitute the vast majority of what is called fashionable life. It is astonishing with what rapidity a man who gets into this predicament

falls into utter insignificance. It was not my case, it is true; but being too proud, or too indolent to undeceive my former friends and adherents, the result to me was the same: from admiration they fell to pity, from pity to contempt; and ere long the name of Percy Blake, once the talisman that opened every heart in Bangalore, had passed into the category of unpronounceable vulgarities.

About this time, Lieutenant-General Sir Nicholas Pipkin was appointed to the command of this division of the Madras army; and arrived at Bangalore, where a spacious and elegant mansion was fitted up for his accommodation. His predecessor having been an old bachelor, the change was hailed with pleasure; Pipkin being a married man, and consequently more likely to contribute to the general enjoyment. All the world was, therefore, agog to pay him and his lady every possible attention; and the commandant's mansion was constantly crowded with visitors, as eager as the Parsees themselves in their adoration of the rising sun.

Two or three of my intimate friends, the only persons who now took any interest in

my fate, pressed me to call amongst the rest: they said it was an essential piece of etiquette; they even insisted on it as a point of duty, to fail in which would be looked upon as singular, if not resented as an impertinence. Their remonstrances, however, were of no avail: society had become so utterly distasteful to me, that man delighted me not, nor woman neither; and to get rid of their importunities, I put myself on the sick-list with an imaginary complaint, to which my melancholy visage gave but too colourable a pretence.

For a long time, I secluded myself within my compound, brooding over the wreck of all my hopes, occasioned by the infidelity of Julia, of which I could now entertain no doubt. The only enjoyment I indulged in, was a solitary walk of an evening; when the fervours of the day were over, and the moon rising in a pure and cloudless sky, shed a silvery radiance, unequalled in any other part of the world, over a scene of rustic tranquillity. The direction I generally took, was towards a beautiful piece of water, called Lady Clive's Tank; embosomed in a splendid tope of mango, tamarind, and cocoa-nut trees, about

two miles from the cantonment; and here, throwing off my clothes, I was accustomed to swim about for an hour or two before I returned to my hermitage.

One evening, on my way to this solitary spot, while immersed in deep rumination on my future destiny, I was startled by the galloping of horses in my front; and looking forward, I could discern by the brilliant moonlight, that it was a riding party returning to the cantonment.

As they rapidly approached, I plunged into the deep shadow of a mango-tree, to avoid observation; and found it was several officers and ladies, apparently in a hurry to get home in time for dinner. As they passed me in full sweep with their ghorawallas panting after them, the moonlight was so brilliant that I felt no difficulty in recognizing the party, though myself screened from view. But, oh heavens! oh earth! what was my astonishment—my ecstacy, when, in the very last lady of the cortège, who was chatting and laughing with an aide-de-camp that cantered by her side, I plainly and distinctly recognized my Julia; paler than when I last saw her, but the same

matchless features, sweet expression, and bewitching smile!

I was confounded, I was thunderstruck for a moment; but when I came to my recollection, I started off in full chase after them, with a speed and energy which few at that time could surpass. It was in vain, however; I was beaten hollow, distanced; and long before I reached the cantonment I had lost every trace of my adorable mistress.

What was now to be done? Fifty methods rushed into my mind at once for discovering the locale of my divinity; but the most obvious was to question one of her riding-party: they were all, however, either staff or cavalry men, and were then, of course, at their respective messes. I had, therefore, nothing for it but to wait, Heaven knows with what impatience, till morning, for the gratification of my excruciating curiosity.

I did all I could, however, to advance my object: I wrote to the surgeon to report me fit for duty; ordered my dubash to get my regimentals ready for parade; abused him for not being quicker in his motions; threw myself on my couch; tried, but in vain, to sleep,

and faithfully counted every stroke of the gong, as it came booming over the esplanade, till the hour of four. Then I started from my sleepless bed; hurried on my clothes and accoutrements, and rushed towards the barracks; where I enjoyed the fresco, by myself, for at least half an hour before the first bugle sounded.

Every one was glad to see me on parade once more; and congratulated me on getting out of the pickling-tub, as they called it.

"You are just in time for the ball," said one.

"I shouldn't wonder," said another, "if that's what brought him out to day."

"What ball?" I asked. "I have not so much as heard of one."

"Sir Nicholas and Lady Pipkin 'At Home' to all the world to night," said a third; "you'll go, of course."

Here the bugle sounded, and we fell in.

During parade, it occurred to me that a ball given to all the world would be the most likely place to find my Julia; for she, the "cynosure" of all eyes, would, of course, be one of its principal attractions. As my impatience, however, would not brook the ordinary occupations of the day, I mounted my

horse after breakfast, and galloped into the jungle; whose mazy labyrinth stretched for many a mile westward of the fort of Bangalore. Here I wandered for hours, amongst the sylvan scenery and rocky eminences of this woodland region: indulging in day-dreams of my approaching bliss, and picturing to myself the delight I should feel in once more gazing unobstructed on the eyes of my beloved; inhaling her balmy breath, and drinking into my enraptured ears the melody of her voice, as she ingenuously accounted for her silence to my letters, and renewed her vows of never-dying affection.

Lamartine calls this indulgence in imaginary bliss the suicide of happiness! Alas!

The sun was descending towards the western horizon, when I returned to the cantonment in time to dress for the evening.

As the reader will readily imagine, I ate very little dinner; and I was so abstracted, that I answered many questions at random to the general amusement. The colonel, making use of one of his big words, said I appeared to be in a perfect state of constipation, and that my thoughts must be in *cœlum quius*.

I got off, however, at an early hour, with three or four others, who seemed desirous of dancing themselves into the staff, a thing by no means uncommon in India; and we arrived at the general's mansion just as the band were tuning their instruments for the first set of quadrilles. We made our bow to Sir Nicholas, a little punchy old man with a bald head, and a copper nose; who received us courteously, and said we should find Lady Pipkin at the other end of the room.

"Come along Blake," said Captain Johnson, "I'll introduce you to her ladyship; I don't think you have seen her yet."

"Oh, bother Lady Pipkin for an old frump!" I replied, "I am in search of more attractive metal."

"Old frump!" exclaimed Johnson, staring at me with evident surprise; "what can you possibly mean?"

But, without stopping to answer him, I pushed on in pursuit of my divinity; elbowing and jostling everybody, with very little ceremony, and scarcely waiting to apologize for my rudeness.

The quadrilles were now forming, and the

band about to strike up, when I reached the upper end of the room; where, to my delight, within a few paces of me stood my Julia, ready to lead off, with an old jungle judge for her partner.

I stood for an instant to gaze upon her, who now constituted the sum total of my earthly bliss. Her dress was splendid; she was one blaze of diamonds, but her native charms far outshone their factitious splendor. Her bosom heaved, as it were, impatient for the dance, as she smiled archly at some remark of her partner's. An aide-de-camp, who stood behind her, clapped his hands thrice; the first *coup d'archet* was given, and her pretty little foot protruded from her white satin jupe, when her eye caught mine, and with a fearful shriek she staggered forward. Instantly bursting through the amazed dancers, I caught her in my arms, before she fell to the ground, and laid her gently on an ottoman that stood near, while several ladies hastened to her assistance.

All was now one scene of indescribable terror and confusion, every one hurrying to and fro, without knowing what was really the matter; some calling out "Fire!" others

screaming out "murder!" Meanwhile, I knelt by the side of my insensible Julia, chafing her temples, and reviling myself as the cause of her fright; when suddenly a hand was laid roughly on my shoulder, and a harsh voice exclaimed:

"Stand aside, Sir! Stand aside!"

I sprang to my feet, and without taking time to ascertain who the intruder was, I seized him by the collar, and hurled him backwards several paces.

"Good heavens! Mr. Blake," cried one of the ladies, "what are you about? You have pushed away the General from his wife!"

"His wife!" I exclaimed with a start of frenzy.

"Certainly," said another. "Don't you know Lady Pipkin?"

"Lady Pipkin!" I cried, striking my forehead in agony. "Merciful heaven! what is to become of me!"

"Step this way, Blake," said Van Beurle, one of the aides-de-camp, taking me kindly by the arm; "I have something particular to say to you."

I accompanied him without knowing why or wherefore, such was the horrible distraction of

my thoughts, and when we had got into an anti-chamber he said:

"I grieve heartily, my dear fellow, at the communication I have to make to you; which is, that you deliver up your sword, and retire to your quarters in close arrest."

I immediately complied with his demand, and said, "There, Van Beurle, give it to my evil genius; and with it give him my commission, since he has deprived me of that which alone could make it sweet."

The good-natured aide-de-camp walked down with me to the verandah, and, putting me into his own palanquin, I was carried home more dead than alive.

For three or four days, I was in a state of utter distraction, raving incessantly on my Julia, defying her husband to the field, stabbing him in her presence, setting fire to her splendid mansion, and carrying her off amidst the flames. "Gracious heaven!" I have often since prayed, "Blot for ever from my memory the horrors of that short but unutterable agony!"

During this period, I had locked myself up in my room, and refused to see any one,

though several had earnestly prayed for admission. Being, then, released from arrest, I consented to see Croker; who, with his usual insouciance, exclaimed:

"Oh, by Jupiter, Percy! you're always putting your foot in it—but this was even worse than shooting a man and a monkey. What on earth could tempt you, now, to kiss the general's wife before all the company?"

I cast a grim smile on my friend, who went on as before:

"But did you ever hear of such an old fool as the General made of himself? What do you think he did now, when you were sent off in arrest?"

I shook my head, without replying.

"Oh!" said Croker, "I suppose that means you don't know: then, by Jupiter, I'll tell you. He called for his head dubash, and said to him in a thundering passion, 'Put out the lights! Take back the wine to the godown! Dismiss the band! Ladies and gentlemen, go home!' And home we accordingly went," said Croker.*

* This part of the story is a ludicrous fact: the

In spite of my wretchedness, I couldn' help laughing heartily at this terrible denouement; and I then learned that Sir Nicholas and his young bride had suddenly departed for Madras. A day or two after, a sealed note was put into my hand by the wife of a brother officer, with whom I was intimate.

It ran in fragments, as follows:

"Farewell for ever, and forgive me—you will —you must, when you hear my sad story—

"They told me you were dead—they said you had fallen by the hand of a friend, whose domestic happiness you had destroyed—

"They had even the cruelty to forge a letter purporting to come from you, on your death-bed—confessing your crime, and praying for forgiveness—

"This letter, the only one, alas! I received from you, accomplished my wretchedness; for, though I afterwards listened to another—still—still—

(Here a few words were obliterated by a tear).

"He however, was not guilty of complicity—

occasion was somewhat different, but the same "teterrima causa belli."

his conduct has been always honourable; and is, even now, kind and considerate, though I have told him all—

"Farewell! If it be any consolation to you to know that you possess my entire and perfect esteem—my—my—be satisfied that you do—I have inquired into, and know all; and shall carry to my grave the sad memory of my cruel, cruel deception."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FLANK BATTALION.

For twelve long months after this terrible blow, I led a life of study and seclusion; restricting myself to the society of my own regiment, and the intimacy of two or three sterling fellows who knew how to appreciate the bitter loss I had sustained. Many tried to bring me back to a life of gaiety and dissipation: but my spirits had suffered too severely; and my mind had received a shock from which it was not easy to recover.

My energies, however, did not sink under the infliction; they were only diverted into another channel. I resolved to become an Oriental scholar; for which purpose, I engaged

a Moonshee, with whom I studied Persian and Hindostanee literature, through the medium of Gilchrist and Sir William Jones. I plunged into the depths of Eastern mythology, till I became lost in the interminable mazes of the Mahabarut and the Ramayuna. I read Todd till I became fascinated with the Rajpoots, and Ferishta till I fancied myself a Mogul. But what was more useful than all, I obtained a fluency in Hindostanee; and could even translate a tale from Ferdusi, or an ode from Hafiz with passable spirit.

During this period, the south of India was in a state of profound peace, though war was raging in Nepaul; where two or three of our generals got shamefully compromised, and cut up by their half-savage enemy; till the cautious and able tactics of Sir David Ochterlony turned the tables, and vindicated the supremacy of our arms. There was, however, a storm brewing in Central India, which ultimately drew us into its vortex; and gave rise to scenes and events of surpassing interest and vast political importance, which effectually roused me from my lethargy, and rescued my mind from hopeless and incurable stagnation.

The Marquis of Hastings, at that time Governor-General, having brought the Nepaul war to a successful termination, or rather Ochterlony having done it for him; and being ambitious of a loftier fame than any of his predecessors had attained, he plunged into another contest, which frightened his masters quite as much as his enemies. Indeed, it is difficult to say whether the Peishwah of the Mahrattas, or the Court of Directors was the most reluctant to encounter the terrors of this mighty and expensive struggle.

It is not, of course, my object to trouble the reader with a history of the Mahratta-Pindarrie war: but a very brief summary will be necessary to enable him to follow the narrative of my personal adventures as connected therewith; and beyond this, I promise him that he need not apprehend any further dry reading from my light, and perhaps, too flippant pen.

Bajee Rao, the Peishwah and nominal head of all the Mahratta States, had long been suspected of harbouring designs against our eastern empire; in which he was aided and abetted by Holkar, Scindia, and the Rajah of Berar; the other chieftains of that powerful confederacy which had overturned the throne of the Mogul,

and reduced to subjection the most wealthy and productive districts of Central India. In order to crush this confederacy before its projects were matured, the Governor-General called into the field the three armies of the Presidencies; and before the Mahrattas had time to strike a blow, they found themselves hemmed in by the Bengal army on the north-east, the Bombay army on the west, and the army of Madras on the south: all these forces, numbering 110,000 men, admirably disciplined and equipped; together with 20,000 irregular cavalry, supplied by the allies of the Company, converging, as by one common impulse, on the very centre of their dominions.

There was a secondary, but a most important object to be also obtained by this armament; viz., the suppression of the Pindarries:—ruthless bands of robbers and murderers, who had originated many years before in the feuds, changes, and commotions, which had so long convulsed the Peninsula. These ferocious plunderers had increased in numbers and audacity at different epochs, till they became, as it were, a nomadic nation; sweeping, like flights of locusts, from one end of

the Deccan to the other, without fixing anywhere their seat of power; and retiring in the rainy season to their obscure retreats on the banks of the Nerbudda, to enjoy themselves on their ill-gotten spoil, and mature their plans for future incursions.

The Pindarries, we are informed by Sir John Malcolm, were not a distinctive race, but a numerous class of men of different races, religions, and habits, gradually associating, and assimilated by a common pursuit. They were all horsemen and all robbers; who, from obscure freebooters, rose into sufficient consequence to be deemed useful auxiliaries by the different Mahratta powers, whose desultory mode of warfare was suited to their habits. Occasionally, the Mahratta rulers purchased their aid by grants of land, or by a tacit admission of their right to possess tracts which they had already usurped. But the more usual price paid for their assistance was the privilege of plundering, even beyond the ordinary license given to a Mahratta army.

When they set out on a lubhur, or expedition, they placed themselves under the guidance of

one or more chosen leaders, called Lubhuriahs; who were selected on account of their knowledge of the country that it was meant to plunder. They never encumbered themselves with tents or baggage; but each horseman carried a few cakes of bread for his own subsistence, and some feeds of grain for his horse. The lubhur, which usually consisted of two or three thousand good horse, with a proportion of mounted followers, advanced at the rapid rate of forty or fifty miles a day; turning neither to the right nor left, till they arrived at their place of destination, where they divided and made a sweep of all the cattle and property they could find; committing, at the same time, the most horrid atrocities, and destroying what they could not carry off.

One of the peculiarities of these miscreants was, that they never fought when they could run away; deeming it wisdom to plunder and fly, but folly to stay and fight. If pursued, they made marches of extraordinary length, by roads almost impracticable for regular troops; but if overtaken, they dispersed to reassemble at an appointed rendezvous; and before an adequate force could be brought against them, they were on their return.

Such were these depredators, whose terrible irruptions, which came as regularly year after year as the tempest of the monsoon, the Governor-General determined to put down, even at the expense of a long and sanguinary war; while, at the same time, he resolved to reduce the great Mahratta Chiefs to such a state of subserviency, as would effectually prevent them from ever after conspiring together against the paramount power of the British.

The Madras contingent of the invading army assembled on the river Toombudra, under Sir Nicholas Pipkin; who, to my great mortification, was accompanied to the field by his lady, for I thus unavoidably came in contact with her occasionally, to our mutual embarrassment. These *rencontres*, however, I avoided as much as possible; devoting myself sedulously to my duties, and acquiring ample knowledge of Indian field service, which was subsequently of essential use to me.

But for many months we led a dull and unsatisfactory life. The arrangements of the Governor General not being yet sufficiently matured to admit of our advancing northward, our operations were of a trivial character, and our marches extended no farther

than from one side of the river to the other, over a sandy soil devoid of vegetation, or amongst heavy cotton grounds; with the thermometer ranging from 110° to 120° in our tents, while our ordinary luxuries, and even comforts, were both scarce and expensive.

This state of inaction produced little else than murmuring and discontent amongst us; but one little incident that occurred, while we were thus kept dodging about in the hot winds, may not be unacceptable to the reader.

Captain Cooke, of "Ours," being on the quarter-guard one day when the thermometer stood at 130° in the sun, retired into his tent, and took a short snooze in his regimentals. His post was just then visited by the field officer of the day, and the guard turning out without their captain, the latter was, of course, loudly called for.

Cooke ran out in a hurry, and being sharply questioned as to the cause of his absence, replied very sententiously:

"Well, Major, I did not think I was expected to stand out the *whole* of the day in the meridian sun."

This little bull made a great laugh against

Cooke, more especially as he did not come from the sod; and I turned it into an epigram as follows:

"Wonder no more, ye sceptics bold,
At miracles perform'd of old,
Recorded in the Sacred Book:—
If Joshua, the son of Nun,
Could stop midway the blazing sun,
'Twas stopp'd as well to-day by Cooke."

This was handed round, and was held to be an improvement on the original: but one officious toady took the scrap of paper to the commanding officer, whose brains being no brighter than those of Cooke himself, it was a long time before he could make either head or tail of my poor epigram.

The Colonel's commentary, when he did gain a competent knowledge of its inflammable nature, was, as usual, luminous and conclusive.

"Meester Blake," he said, "thocht himsel, and nae doot he was an unco clever chiel; but he had mony things yet to larn, espeecially in skeeleton drill, where he was too often oot in his distance, and did not always come up successfully into line. With respec to this conundrum, he was an enemy to all sic like; an he

was nae that sure, but they were in direc contradeection to the airticles o' war. Every one knew, quite as weel as Meester Blake, clever as he thocht himsel, that a meridian was a sort of a roon-aboot three square, that the captain of an Eendiaman aye looked through when he wanted to see what o'clock it was by the sun; an he didna ken why Captain Cooke might not mak use of the same term. Then the word 'blazing sun' was vara unscreeptural; every one kenned that the sun was in the centre of heaven, and that the 'blazes' belonged to the ither place, which it was nae that canny to mention. With respec to one Joshua, the son of a nun, it was unco indiscreet of Meester Blake to eentroduce ony sic a person to the notice of his brither officers; an he was quite sure they kenned naething aboot ony sic a low-bred fallow: as for Captain Cooke stopping the blazing sun, he did not consider him sic a daft carl as to burn his fingers with ony sic expeeriment." Finally, the adjutant came to me laughing, with a request from the colonel, that "I would not write ony mair sic whigmaleeries, whilk only sarved to brew ill-bluid, and set folks togither by the lug."

This literary delinquency did not, however, prevent McClish from conferring upon me soon after a post of great confidence. As light field-movements were to be the order of the day, in the approaching campaign, Sir Nicholas Pipkin was directed to form a Flank Battalion, to consist of ten light companies from the different regiments under his command, both Native and British. The command of this chosen band he conferred upon Colonel McClish, as confessedly the smartest officer in the whole force; and McClish having appointed me his Adjutant, both he and I vied with each other in our efforts, to bring our motley corps into the highest state of perfection. This we did by unwearied assiduity and attention, in the course of five or six months; and though, at first, the men complained of the severity of drill, they ultimately took so much pride in the admirable condition to which we had brought them, that one spirit of emulation seemed to influence every individual of the battalion.

Nor was it allowed to evaporate. Orders were, at length, issued for an advance on the Mahratta territories; and, to my great comfort,

the Flank Battalion being removed from the immediate command of Sir Nicholas Pipkin, was attached to the division of Brigadier-General, Sir Lionel Smith. Under him it bore a distinguished part in his famous pursuit of Bajee Rao, the Peishwah of the Mahrattas, when that prince ran away from his capital Poonah; and also in the reduction of his numerous strongholds.

For these events, I must refer the reader to other works. It will be sufficient here to say, that the Peishwah, after flying with his discomfited troops before Smith's victorious division, over many hundred miles of most difficult country, finally gave himself up to the British; abdicated his power in their favour, and retired with a pension of £80,000 per annum, to enjoy a life of ease and luxury, near Cawnpore, on the Ganges.

This celebrated chase was immediately after succeeded by another long hunt, in which the Flank Battalion bore a distinguished part; after Apa Sahib, the Rajah of Berar. This prince's complicity, in the conspiracy against the British, having been laid bare, his capital, Nagpore, was taken possession of, after a determined resistance. A cantonment being laid out, and

speedily erected in the vicinity, a large body of the Madras contingent was stationed there, under Sir Nicholas Pipkin, while we were detached in pursuit of the fugitive Rajah.

After a long chase, through a wild and savage country, in which Apa Sahib was hunted from one fastness to another, we at length penned him up in the hill-fortress of Asseerghur, which we immediately besieged and took, after a long and desperate resistance. During the *melée*, however, Apa Sahib escaped in the disguise of a Sepoy, and fled to the country of the Sikhs; where he was indirectly sheltered for the remainder of his life, by Runjeet Singh, the lion of the Punjaub.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PINDARRIE CHASE.

THE Flank Battalion was now returning to Nagpore, after this ineffectual pursuit of Apa Sahib; and as we proceeded by easy marches, the men were much less fatigued than might have been expected from the great distance they had travelled, at so constant and so quick a pace. In fact, they were much less harassed than annoyed at losing their prey: for the ex-Rajah was said to carry jewels of such immense value about his person, that they had all anticipated handsome prize money; and their feelings against the foe, especially the Pindarries, who had materially aided his escape, were embittered in proportion to their disappointment, a

circumstance which, in the result, produced the happiest effects.

I was riding with the Colonel at the head of the battalion, on the last day's march; listening with becoming attention as he suggested various improvements in the equipment of the men on these light expeditions, and the better organization of Bheesties and Bangywallas; when, within three miles of cantonments, we descried an officer, followed by an orderly dragoon, riding towards us at full speed.

He soon came up, puffing and blowing like a grampus, and proved to be the Brigade-Major; a short, pursy little fellow, and a great gourmand.

"Colonel," he exclaimed, as soon as he recovered breath, "Sir Nicholas requests you will be good enough to hasten your march, for we have had a terrible to-do here in your absence."

"What's the matter noo, mon?" demanded the Colonel. "Something or ither is aye sure to gae wrang when the Flank Battalion's awa."

"Well, that is the fact," replied the Brigade Major, who always knew when a little soft-sawder was acceptable. "Those rascally Pindarries, finding that you were absent on a wild-

goo—hem! ahem!—secret expedition, pounced upon us last night; and absolutely harried the whole cantonment, in as little time as you'd take to carve a plum-pudding."

"De'il ha' my body and saul, mon!" exclaimed the Colonel. "Did the ramscallions do muckle mischeef?"

"My bungalow is utterly gutted," replied the fat official, with a look of desolation quite comic. "Compound, godown, larder, piggery, and poultry-yard! There is not so much as a merry-thought left of all my beautiful stock."

"Did I na tell ye, mon," said the Colonel, "that your bungalow was too far awa frae the main-guard?"

"True, my dear Colonel, true," sighed the poor sufferer. "I wish to heavens I had taken your wise counsel. But then, you know, I always require so much space for my stock—and I had such a splendid piggery! But the villains have gobbled up everything—geese, turkeys, hams, humps, and capons—I had the loveliest litter of sucking-pigs—"

"Weel, aweel!" cried the Colonel, impatiently, "what other mischeef have they done?"

"Done!" replied the official, as if amazed at the stupendous amount and universal importance of his own particular losses; "they have guttled my wines, brandies, and brown stout! They havn't left me as much as would wet the whistle of a tom-tit!"

"Weel, weel, mon!" said the Colonel, snappishly.

"I had the divinest batch you ever saw of Lafitte," resumed the *bon-vivant*, "imported by myself from Bordeaux, direct; and the dearest little cask of 'Particular'—clear crystalline, amber-coloured, as ever came from Madeira. In fact, my dear Colonel, I had set apart these special favourites, to welcome your return."

"Thank ye for naething, then," said the Colonel, who well knew the value of a French compliment. "But deil ha' my saul! the chiels are a' ganging asleep. Strike up bugles! close up thae rear sections: step oot men—step oot in front!"

We accordingly now began to step out in earnest; and the Brigade-Major, meanwhile, resumed his catalogue of disasters.

"Then, there's the poor dear general," he exclaimed, with a look of official commi-

seration. "They say, his misfortunes have driven the gout into his stomach."

"What do you say?" I now for the first time demanded. "What about the General's misfortunes?"

"His poor dear family, Blake, all destroyed," was the reply.

"Great heaven!" I exclaimed. "Is it possible?"

"Poor Shigram Po!" continued the Brigade Major.

"D—n Shigram Po!" I exclaimed, in a pet.

"With all my heart!" responded the complaisant official; "but let me tell you, Blake, that he was one of the best, if not the very best cook in the whole Madras army; I don't care who the other—"

"But, Lady Pipkin!" I said, impetuously. "What of Lady Pipkin?"

"Poor dear Lady Pipkin!" he replied. "Let me see! Oh! she's either burnt to death, speared through the body, or carried off by the Pindarries. I came out in such a hurry, that I couldn't ascertain which."

The agony I was thrown into by the ego-

tistical prosing of this sensual hog was excruciating. I demanded permission to ride forward, to ascertain the worst, but this the Colonel himself did. Meanwhile, we hurried on at such a pace, that we were soon drawn up on the parade; having proofs enough around us, in the still blazing bungalows and smoking ruins, of the desolating course of the ruthless Pindarries.

All this mischief had been done in two or three hours, by a *lubhur* of ten thousand, under two active and notorious chiefs, Sevajee and Secunder Jah; who, sweeping down suddenly, like a whirlwind, upon the too-scattered cantonment, at an hour when all were buried in profound repose, effected their villanous purpose, before a body of troops could be got together to oppose them. Having carried off everything worth taking, and wantonly destroyed the rest, they scoured and scampered off, in their usual manner, as rapidly as they came, no one knowing whither, or in what direction.

As speedily as possible, however, Major Lumsden had started in chase of them with three squadrons of Light Dragoons, and galloper-guns; while Captain King pursued them

by another road, with two batteries of flying artillery.

While listening to these details, the Colonel galloped up, and addressed the line in a short but pithy speech, as follows:

"Sodgers!

"The Geeneral wants twa hunred volunteers, to follow thae rantipole Pindarries, wha hae carried awa his wife and bairn. Ilka mon wha joins willingly and *nolens volens* in the pursuit, is to receive ten rupees frae the Geeneral's ain pouch, and he wha rescues the leddy and her puir wee bairn, a thoosand."

I spurred forward at the first words the Colonel uttered, and dropping the point of my sword, claimed the honor of being the first volunteer on the occasion.

"Nay, but Meester Blake," said the Colonel, "I canna spare ye frae the orderly-room; I shall hae sic a muckle sight o' leeterary correspondence, mon, aboot this infarnal clanjamfry."

"Colonel," I replied, firmly; "I claim this honor as a right; being the senior subaltern of

my regiment, and as such entitled to lead the first forlorn-hope."

"Weel, aweel!" cried the Colonel, somewhat puzzled, "I dinna dispute the reet, mon; but what the deil am I to do for a *maniwonsis*?"

"I'll find you one," I replied: "there's Jenkins, the junior subaltern of my company, who writes a much better hand than I do myself; and who," I added, *sotto voce*, "will be very much obliged to me for leaving him at home."

"Weel, weel," said the Colonel, whose test of scholarship consisted in superior caligraphy; "we'll see aboot it, mon; but recollec, Sir, that I shall require the pen of a reedy writer, as Shakspeare says."

My own company instantly volunteered to a man, as did several others, both native and European; and eventually the whole regiment came forward: but the Colonel would give me only one hundred Europeans and a hundred Sepoys, with a dozen Light Cavalry as scouts. I was very well content with this arrangement; for the native soldiers of the Flank Battalion were all brave fellows, very much attached to their Adjutant, and quite as capable of bearing

fatigue and privation as the Europeans themselves.

"And noo, Blake," said the Colonel, taking me aside, "I shall na seend ony o' the Captains wi ye, mon, that ye may ha' it a' ye're own way, soleass cum soleass, as the French say."

I expressed myself, and really felt, grateful to McClish, for this act of kindness; and, shaking hands, he wished me a *sus*peecious and triumphant journey.

Preparations were now made for a speedy start; an excellent dinner was prepared for the men, which they ate on the parade (under tents pitched for those who had been unhoused); with a double allowance of rum for the Europeans, and vegetable curries in abundance for the natives. Fresh flints, and sixty rounds of ammunition, were served out to each man: strong, active camels were furnished by the commissariat, to accompany us, laden with rice, dol, pickled pork, biscuit, rum, coffee, sugar, &c., and a sufficient number of *bheesties* with mussuks, or water-bags. These, with the officers' private servants and bangywallas, secured us pretty well against all apprehension of hunger and thirst on the expedition, through a country

which we could only expect to find in a state of desolation; while the warmth and dryness of the weather enabled us to dispense altogether with tents and camp equipage.

In three or four hours' time, we were ready to start on this fresh expedition, after having just accomplished one of several hundred miles, in pursuit of Apa Sahib. The men were in the highest possible spirits, while the whole cantonment turned out to witness our departure, and bid us God speed.

Fortunately, for some time past, I had very much devoted my attention to the geography and topography of the country between Nagpore and the Nerbudda. I had furnished myself with, and collated the best published maps; and had even drawn up some myself, with the assistance of a friend in the Engineers, founded partly on actual survey, and partly on information collected from *hircarrahs, tappall* men, *brinjaries,* and other intelligent natives. I was thus well prepared for the command I had undertaken; and, as I knew there would be little use in following with infantry the precise track of the Pindarries, whose hardy Mahratta horses travelled at the rate of forty

miles a day on these expeditions; I determined to strike at once across the country, for the principal fords of the Nerbudda, on which the different *lubhurs* would be converging, to cross that formidable stream, before the approaching rains should render it impracticable.

Keeping, therefore, the lofty Droog of Gawilghur to the left, as an excellent landmark, I directed my route, by compass, for Hindia, on the right bank of the Nerbudda, where I knew that the principal ford was situated; scouting well to the right, myself and my dragoons, in the hope of hearing something of the foe.

Nor was it long before we met with sad vestiges of their ruthless course, in the flying inhabitants of the intervening country; some driving their cattle before them, laden with their simple implements of husbandry, and the few household utensils, or other valuables they had been able to save from the spoiler. Every individual man, woman, and child, above six years old, carried a load of grain proportioned to their strength: the mothers, in addition, bearing their infants astride on their hips, in the peculiar manner of the Hindoo female.

But these lucky fugitives were on the out-

skirts of the tract of country through which the gang of fiends had swept, like the deadly simoom, spreading ruin and desolation in their fearful course. As we drew nearer to the focus of their operations, then, indeed, our hearts were rent with pity and horror. Ruined villages, shattered walls, and smoking homesteads, told too vividly the tragic tale: while, if anything could increase the rage that filled our breasts, it was the horrid sight of dead and dying bodies, men, women, and children; the helpless, inoffensive inhabitants of this once peaceful region, now mingled in one common scene of butchery. Some had their noses and ears cut off by the ruthless monsters, in their horrid impatience to possess themselves of ear-rings and nose-rings: young women, with their hands and feet mercilessly chopped off by the battle-axe of the Pindarrie, eager to clutch the silver bracelet and anklet of the hapless wearer. Old men groaning in agony, to the soles of whose feet red-hot irons had been applied, to enforce a disclosure of concealed treasure; others, whose clothes had been saturated with oil, and ignited; and many whose heads were tied up in bags filled with hot ashes, and thus frightfully suffo-

cated. Though a few years previously, I had looked with horror on the cruelties committed by the French in Spain and Portugal; they were infinitely surpassed by those which marked the course of the fiend-like Pindarries.

But I shall no longer pain the reader's breast by my feeble relation of horrors, which no language can adequately describe. The savage monsters pursued their merciless career, unchecked by any feeling of human pity, till the hour of retribution came, as come it did; for, even in this unaccountable world, the just vengeance of the Deity is often evinced in a manner not to be mistaken.

We had now been three days upon our march; in which time we had passed over eighty miles of country, without encountering the enemy. We generally marched at the rate of thirty miles in the four-and-twenty hours; the greater portion of this distance being got over in the night, the most favourable time for expeditions of this nature; especially at this season of the year, when the roads were good, the grass-jungles burnt up, and few or no tigers lurking near the highways. During the excessive heat of the day, when the ground was hot enough

to scorch the feet, we lay by in the jungle, of which there was no scarcity; and that was the time for cooking, eating, sleeping, washing, and otherwise refreshing ourselves for the toils of the night.

Our route lay through a country of diversified character. Sometimes we stumbled on through deep wooded glens and ravines, into whose dark recesses the silver radiance of the moon could seldom penetrate. Sometimes the country was rich in the extreme; studded with villages, and covered with luxuriant fields of wheat, hemp, grain, sugar-cane, &c.; and at others, nature seemed to riot in unbounded luxuriance: lofty trees spreading on all sides their gigantic arms, while the road was fringed with thorny and prickly shrubs, of every size and shape; and canes soaring to the height of sixty feet and upwards. Nothing interrupted our progress, or disturbed us on the way, except occasionally the low, deep growl of a tiger, as he skulked into the woods,—the ferocious grunt of a wild hog, whose lair we had beat up,—or the mournful cry of a pack of jackals, which bore a character of appalling and desolate melancholy.

At length, we began to get tidings of the Pindarries, and everything now seemed to indicate our mutual approximation; for it was evident that, pursuing, as it were, the chord of the semi-circle they were describing, we had intercepted their retreat, and actually stood between them and the ford by which they calculated on passing the river.

On the morning of the fourth day, I was scouting, as usual, at some distance from the line of march, when I heard female shrieks on the other side of a belt of jungle that lay a little distance in my front.

Sounds of this description had always met with a ready response in my breast; but now that my thoughts were pre-occupied with Julia, and the horrible captivity into which she was plunged, my zeal in the cause of the oppressed was increased tenfold. Giving the reins to my Arab, the best of two which I rode alternately on these excursions, he bounded forward, and speedily cleared the bosky obstacle that lay before us.

Beyond this was a tract of cleared level ground, over which a Pindarrie, armed with a long spear, was cantering; dragging after him,

in spite of prayers and entreaties, an unhappy woman, round whose neck he had fastened a coil of rope, such as the scoundrels always carry at their saddle-bow for exploits of this nature.

Enraged at the fellow's brutality, for the hapless creature would sometimes fall to the earth, and thus be dragged for many yards along the rugged surface of the ground, my first impulse was to shoot him with my rifle: but, reflecting that if I could take him alive, he might serve as a guide to the encampment of the lubhur, I re-slung the trusty weapon, drew my sabre, and, dashing forward with a loud shout, challenged the villain to the combat.

He no sooner saw me, than he cast off his victim; and, digging the stirrup-iron, which contains the spur, into the sides of his horse, he galloped off with all the speed of the animal, in the opposite direction.

But the poltroon had now a high-blood Arab, and an Irish fox-hunter to contend with; and the chase was speedily determined. I was coming up with him, hand over hand, when, turning round in his saddle, with ferocious

threats and villanous language, he levelled one of his pistols at me, with a very deliberate aim; but the weapons of the Pindarries are never of a trustworthy character, and it missed fire. He then discharged the other with better effect, the ball passing through my cap, but fortunately without touching my head. At last, finding that he had only one more chance for his life, he very adroitly wheeled his horse round, as I approached; and, poising his spear, rushed at me with the hope of pinning me to the earth.

Another moment, and my doom was sealed. But with a presence of mind, which has fortunately never failed me, by a dexterous application of spur and snaffle, my gallant steed made a side-spring, which cleared me of the formidable weapon; while, with a back-stroke of my sabre, I cut the bamboo shaft in two, and the Pindarrie lay at my mercy.

Finding it all over with him, he became as humble now, as before he had been bold and insolent. He threw himself off his horse, fell upon his knees, and begged for his life in the most abject terms. I untwisted the fellow's turban, which was of enormous length, thereby

scattering abroad sundry nose-rings, ear-rings, and other poor maid's jewels, of which it was the repository; and, tying one end of it round his neck, I thus led him, more mercifully than he had done his poor captive, to where he beheld, to his amazement, the band of avengers whom he imagined safe in the cantonment of Nagpore.

Having halted the detachment, I summoned my brother officers to council; and we had no difficulty in obtaining all necessary information from the now crest-fallen Pindarrie.

The lubhur was to halt that night at a large village, called Chillumbaucum, about five miles to our right; hoping to cross the Nerbudda the following day, unscathed, and with all their ill-gotten treasures. They were certain, he said, after having plundered the village, to spend the night in feasting and carousing; and as it is one of the well-known peculiarities of this race of monsters never to set guards, or post sentries, over their bivouacs; trusting entirely, it seems, to the rapidity of their movements, and the fleetness of their horses, I entertained no doubt whatever, of our ultimate success. The odds, it is true, in point of numbers, were greatly

against us; but nothing, I felt assured, could withstand the discipline, courage, and physical prowess of British troops.

Having given the men a two hours' rest, during which they cooked and ate a hearty supper, we set off in the highest confidence and spirits; under the guidance of our Pindarrie, whom I placed between two officers, with directions to shoot him instantly, if he evinced any treachery, or attempted to escape.

It was now past nine o'clock: the night, luckily, was dark as pitch, not a star even to be seen in the firmament; while a profound silence reigned over the wide expanse of woodland scenery, through which our route lay; all the wretched inhabitants who were not dead or dying, having fled from the horrid vicinity of the ravagers as far as their trembling limbs would carry them. All this was highly favourable to our undiscovered advance: but, as our progress was necessarily slow and cautious, it was midnight ere we approached the village; which was surrounded, within a little distance, by a screen of thick jungle, that effectually concealed our movements.

Every thing in the village, which was large enough to accommodate the entire *lubhur*, with

the exception of their elephants and cattle, which were picketed outside, was settling into the most profound repose; and a general hush was absorbing the concatenation of noises which had but recently sprung from the shouts of the drunkards, the neighing of horses, the trumpeting of elephants, the growling of camels, the jingling of bells, and the monotonous tapping and thumping of tomtoms. Here and there a riotous party were prolonging their carouse; till, one after another, they insensibly dropped off into that deep sleep upon the bare earth, from which so many of them were never more to awaken. By the lurid glare of the burning houses, which they had first plundered, and then wantonly set fire to; and by the flames of the consuming furniture, piled up in the streets to light them in their godless revels, we could distinguish all their proceedings as plainly as at noon-day; mark the points of attack where our onset was most likely to be effectual, and make our dispositions accordingly.

Right in front of the station I had taken up to reconnoitre, sat a circle of the principal chiefs and officers, with a large fire burning in the midst. Some of these were clad in showy mail, or plate armour, with swords, shields, and

matchlocks, while others were armed with spears, creeses, and round lackered shields; their bodies being defended by a leathern cuirass, or a quilted sword-proof jacket: all were engaged in animated discussion, which appeared to have reference to the morrow's proceedings, and the amount and division of the spoil.

As I gazed on this paraphernalia, gorgeous but trumpery, when opposed to the musket ball and the British bayonet; a group of Pindarries, armed with matchlocks, targets, spears, and swords, arrived, hurrying along with them into the circle, a venerable Brahmin, who loudly begged and prayed for mercy; but he was now in the clutches of those who knew not the meaning of the term. Being ordered to discover where he had concealed his treasure, he called heaven to witness, in the most pathetic language, that he had not a rupee in all the world: a shout of scorn followed this disclaimer, and the tormentors were ordered to do their duty.

These horrid wretches, who seemed to delight in their infernal task, first wound a quantity of old rags, saturated with oil, round his fingers, and set them on fire; while, as the poor wretch felt his flesh burn and consume under the ap-

plication, and danced about in excruciating agony, he became the subject of brutal mirth and laughter to these incarnate fiends. The first effort of the executioners not having produced the desired effect, they next produced a horse's nose-bag; filled it nearly with hot ashes from the fire, tied it over the head of their victim, and thumped him violently on the back, till he was forced to inhale a portion of its contents. No human powers or patience could long endure this frightful mode of suffocation: the wretched victim rolled in convulsions upon the ground, till one chief, more merciful than the rest, drove a spear through his body, and put a period to his torments.

Gladly would I, at that moment, have given the signal for attack; but I should thereby have defeated my principal object, and only half accomplished the duty I had imposed upon myself. I, therefore, restrained my impatience until the deep silence of the Pindarrie camp indicated that all were sunk in profound repose.

The village principally consisted of one main street, whose entire length and breadth were crowded with the marauders, lying about in all directions, and in different stages of drunkenness; their horses, as I before observed, being

picketed outside, together with numerous elephants, camels, bullocks, and bullock-bandies, all heavily laden with the varied spoils of the campaign. From the main street branched off several lateral passages, or lanes, leading to pathways through the jungle; and at the outlets of these I stationed small parties, with directions to shoot down all who attempted to escape in those directions. The remainder of my force I divided into two bodies; the strongest of which was to commence the attack at one end of the main street, while the rest were to line the road at the other, by which alone the fugitives could hope to fly.

In short, everything succeeded to our wish. About two o'clock in the morning, when some of the Pindarries began to stir themselves and prepare for the road, a rocket soared aloft from a little eminence on which I stood; and, ere its hissing had subsided, a volley from the attacking party rang the knell of death to the monsters, who had so long spread, with impunity, every description of horror which the mind can conceive, over many hundred miles of territory, and over thousands upon thousands of helpless and inoffensive beings.

Scarcely had the echo of the first volley

ceased, when another and another succeeded, each covering the ground with killed and wounded; while the survivors, now effectually roused from their slumbers, ran wildly about in terror and dismay, uttering frightful yells of horror and amazement. But the villains met in all directions the stroke of fate, and perished amidst a continuous peal of musketry, which fell upon them they knew not whence; as if the justly-excited anger of the Deity had recalled to life their innumerable victims, and filled their avenging hands with fire from heaven.

Day broke in the midst of the slaughter; when the bravest and most desperate of the marauders endeavoured to make head against their now visible enemy. But though they advanced in heavy masses, with sword, and spear, and matchlock, they were met everywhere with the close sustained fire of sections and subdivisions. The British bayonet finally terminated the conflict, and the lubhur of ten thousand robbers and murderers was scattered to the four winds of heaven in irretrievable defeat; their horses, elephants, camels, and bullocks, remaining in the hands of the victors, with all the accumulated plunder of every district of the Deccan.

CHAPTER XV.

THE KUBBEER-BUR

Of the remnant of this murderous band, few of whom escaped unhurt from the balls and bayonets of my gallant Light Bobs, two only were now visible; but these were mounted upon fleet and powerful horses, of the celebrated breed from the banks of the Beemah, and the rapidity of their flight from the scene of action, evinced their speed and freshness. From their dress and accoutrements, these fugitives were evidently chiefs of eminence, and apparently brave fellows; for, though unable to struggle any longer against an overpowering foe, they waved their hands in scorn and defiance, and called upon us, with every abusive epithet which

their language so abundantly supplies, to follow if we dared.

Jaded as my trusty Arabs were, after the exertions of the previous day and night, I would have willingly allowed these two fellows to escape, and even have stomached their insolent bravado; but I was driven almost to madness by seeing that one of them bore a female on the pommel of his saddle, and the other held a child in his arms.

Satisfied in my own mind, that these could be no other than the lady and infant heir of the General, the cherished objects of our search, I dashed the rowels into the panting sides of my generous steed; who sprang forward, as if imbued with my own feelings, and bore me in headlong chase after the foe; determined to die rather than suffer my still-adored Julia to continue at the mercy of such ruthless villains.

Without waiting to see if I was followed by any of my party, on I went in full career, over hill and dale, through dell and dingle; under the branches of lofty trees, that cast a deep shadow on the ground, and anon exposed to the fervid rays of the sun, where the barren

heath, and the rocky desert lay in our path. Still, however, I gained not upon the chase; and it vexed me sorely to perceive that, although my Arab was at the full stretch of his somewhat exhausted powers, the Pindarries were evidently restraining the fleetness of their noble steeds, husbanding, as it were, their strength and activity for a more deadly push; while, ever and anon, they would salute me with a volley of oaths and imprecations, exclaiming, "Feringhee Banchoot! Teereemaukachoot!" and other equally brutal and offensive terms.

And yet they must have felt that their lives were in my hands; for, with my trusty rifle, I had frequent opportunities of bringing them down: but I was withheld, by the apprehension of injuring those dear beings, whose lives I would gladly save at the risk of my own. I shouted, however, the name of Julia, till my bosom ached with the effort, to let her know that help was nigh; and her cries in return, were a sufficient proof that she heard and understood my object. Nay, I once thought I could catch upon the gale the name of Blake, in imploring accents: but this must have been fancy; for, though conscious of the pursuit, she

could not possibly be aware that the pursuer was one who had once been, and perhaps still was, so dear to her heart.

On, on we went in full career; the powers of horse and man being multiplied, as it were, by the maddening excitement of the chase: bounding over steep and dangerous nullahs, and dashing through foaming torrents, which now frequently obstructed our way, indicating our vicinity to some great stream of which they were the tributaries. Once I thought myself sure of my prey; for the horse on which poor Julia rode made an awful stumble in crossing one of these streams, and my heart leapt to my mouth at the apprehension of her danger; but the noble beast recovered himself; and, as if ashamed of the slip he had made, redoubled his efforts; shaking his head and champing the bit, as if determined to pluck the reins out of his rider's hands.

On, on we went, reckless of dangers and heedless of obstructions; the fugitives apparently anxious to keep only a certain distance, and no more, between them and their pursuer, while I made every effort, but in vain, to diminish that distance. When we first started in

this unequal chase, and for some time after, the shouts and cries of battle still rang in our ears; and an occasional volley, or a few dropping shots, seemed to indicate that the work of death was not yet terminated. But all these sounds had now ceased; and nothing was to be heard but the clattering of the horses' feet on the rocky soil, or the braying of a deer, or the crowing of the jungle-cock in the distance. My horse was one sheet of foam, and the perspiration rolled down my own face in streams, as we laboured through the deep soil of some cotton-grounds, which sorely tried the blood and bottom of my Arab; for his strength had long been decaying, while the steeds of the enemy still seemed to retain their pristine freshness and vigour.

At length, we came to a long, sloping eminence of broken, rocky ground; and here it was that the fugitives seemed determined to exhibit their superior powers: for, with a shout of defiance, and a volley of curses, they urged their horses to a final effort, and the gallant steeds bounded upwards as if they carried a feather-weight. Enraged at the prospect of being distanced, which now seemed inevitable; excited almost to frenzy by seeing Julia wave her scarf

as they gained the top, and stood out in bold relief against the sky, I encouraged my Arab with voice and hand; and nobly the generous animal responded to the call, for in a few elastic bounds we also gained the summit of the ridge.

Oh! what a glorious prospect opened to my astonished gaze! The mighty Nerbudda winding its majestic course through a boundless expanse of woodland scenery of unequalled magnificence: its turbid waters swollen by the rains, which had just set in to the eastward, overflowing its sedgy banks; while the awe-inspiring solitude and silence that reigned on every side were unbroken; and nothing human was in sight to jar with the immeasurable grandeur of Nature in repose, but the two Pindarries, now urging their horses with all their might directly towards the wild-rolling current.

Upbraiding myself for the involuntary transport which had caused a momentary delay, I again took up the chase, satisfied that now, at last, I must soon have the enemy at bay; for any attempt to cross the boiling flood before us on horseback, encumbered as they were, must have been fatal to all. I tightened my reins, grasped my rifle more firmly, set my teeth for a

final effort; and, recommending my soul to a just and merciful Providence, I dashed forward, utterly regardless of what became of its earthly incumbrance, in the stern and sacred path of duty.

A screen of tall sedges that grew upon the banks of the river, had now hidden the enemy from my view: but, having marked the spot at which they had disappeared, I directed my course thither; when, to my astonishment, as I drew nigh, the two horses came galloping out without riders, caracolling, and flinging their hind legs in the air; while their bridle-reins, being fastened to the pommels of the saddles, showed that their escape was not accidental, but the customary trick of the Pindarries, when hard beset. My two gentlemen had, doubtless, sought concealment in some cavern, or hollow in the river's brink; and their steeds were thus let loose, to find their way, as best they could, to one or other of their numerous haunts in this wild and savage district.

Determined, however, to find the enemy, or perish in the attempt, I plunged into the midst of this bed of reeds, shouting "Julia! Julia!" to the utmost compass of my voice; but no-

thing responded to my call. Raging with excitement, onward I pushed my noble steed, following the narrow track which led through this dense and lofty bed of reeds, till I came, at length, to the water-side; when, amidst the angry current, about two hundred yards distant, I beheld the two Pindarries, skilfully and energetically rowing one of those coracles, or circular boats made of wicker-work, and covered with untanned hides, so common on the rivers of India.

Julia and her infant were no where to be seen. They were probably, I thought, at the bottom of the coracle; but the Pindarries were more than half exposed to view, as they urged the boat, in its circular motion, through the mass of waters, towards an island in the middle of the stream; entirely overgrown with what appeared to me, a tope of magnificent trees, whose foliage extended down, like a vast umbrella, even into the very waters of the Nerbudda.

A shout of triumph, and another round of insulting epithets, rang from the two Pindarries —but it was the last they uttered in concert; for, bringing the butt of my trusty rifle to my

shoulder, I took a steady aim, and one of the two fell to rise no more. Unluckily, my other barrel had been discharged in the action, or his companion would have shared his fate; but, before I had time to reload and fire again, the surviving Pindarrie had whirled his light bark beyond the range on which I could certainly calculate, and he got off scot free.

My only hope now was to swim my horse across the foaming flood, to the island; an attempt perilous enough in itself, exclusive of the reception I might expect from the Pindarrie on the other side. But courage mounteth with occasion: I wet my own lips with my brandy flask, poured the remainder down the throat of my horse, who neighed loudly, as if invigorated by the draught; then, springing again upon his back, I plunged into the world of waters.

And a desperate struggle we had in that boundless waste, as it then appeared to me, of "rolling and foaming billows." The monsoon had just set in, and with more than ordinary violence; the rains on the mountain range in the upper part of the valley of the Nerbudda had, therefore, swelled the thousand tributaries

of that noble stream, which was now every moment increasing in width and volume; inundating the lower grounds, and isolating the more lofty portions of its banks, whose rocky and wooded summits now appeared like so many islands in the vast expanse.

The current was powerful: but I made my Arab breast its impetuosity, that we might not be carried down lower than the coracle; and, in this respect, we had the advantage of the Pindarrie, who, being reduced to his one oar, was driven bodily to leeward. Our progress was thus vexatiously slow; but I evidently gained upon the chase — so much, indeed, that the villain once or twice handled his matchlock, as if determined to give me its contents. Apparently, however, not thinking the opportnity a good one, he laid it by again, and resumed the oar. This reminded me that I had discharged both my barrels; and I reloaded them as speedily as I could under the circumstances, being half immersed in water, and requiring all my undivided efforts to keep my horse up against the rapidity of the current.

We were now nearing the island, whose vast

screen of foliage, though it looked beautiful and refreshing to the eye, long dazzled with the blaze of oriental noon, was in other respects discouraging, from the facilities for escape it must necessarily afford the fugitive. The latter had got into a current of the river, with whose peculiarities he seemed perfectly well acquainted, which carried him with immense velocity towards the shore: with very little further exertion on his part, he speedily touched the bank, jumped out, and moored his frail bark to the stem of a tree whose branches overarched him, as they bent downwards and dipt their foliage in the stream.

Having thus secured his vessel, the Pindarrie lost no time in seizing upon his prey. Getting into the coracle again, he lifted the insensible Julia upon his shoulder, trussed the poor infant under his arm, and, even thus encumbered, sprang nimbly upon the shore, and disappeared in the windings of the forest.

Maddened at the idea of his thus escaping with his precious spoil, I urged my horse forward to redoubled exertion; while, as he snorted and pawed the flood, he seemed anxious to give me one last proof of unconquerable spirit and

fidelity. But, alas, for my gallant Arab! it was his last: for, as he raised his head aloft, in a sudden and convulsive effort to reach the shore, a ball from the matchlock of the concealed Pindarrie, which was well aimed for my body, struck him in a vital part behind the ear, and with a gasp and a plunge, he sank into the boiling flood, carrying me down with him; while the Pindarrie's shout of triumph rang bitterly in my ear.

Fortunately, I had presence of mind, in that critical moment of my fate, to stretch my arm out at full length, so as to keep my rifle above the water; then slipping my feet out of the stirrups, I struck out with my left arm, and speedily rose to the surface.

The current was carrying me rapidly past the spot where the Pindarrie had disappeared: but being a powerful swimmer, I soon reached the shore; and never did a poor drowning wretch bless Providence so heartily for escape—the preservation of my own life weighing but little in the scale, when compared with the exulting hope of still rescuing my beloved Julia from the fangs of this atrocious fiend.

I now examined the priming of my rifle, and

was delighted to find it perfectly dry: I had thus a double death in my hand; and, with renewed vigour from my involuntary bath, I set forward with as much celerity as the obstacles I encountered, permitted.

But, much as I had been struck with the dense magnitude of the foliage in which this solitary island was embowered, I was still more amazed to discover, on landing, that it did not spring from many distinct and separate trees, but from one gigantic banyan, whose enormous branches, spreading out horizontally, sent their shoots down to the earth. There taking root, they grew to almost equal size with the parent stem; and propagated in their turn fresh stems, shoots, and branches, in singular and endless variety.

I had often read, in the Wonders of India, of the Kubbeer-bur, or gigantic banyan-tree, which covered a whole island in the Nerbudda, and was capable of giving shelter to ten thousand men; this, it seems, was the identical spot in which I now so unexpectedly found myself.

In silent awe at the marvellous works of creation, I wandered amidst the mazy labyrinth,

which lay before me in fantastic vistas; at times resembling the rude outlines of natural grottos, and at others, the lofty and pillared aisles of a Gothic cathedral: while a stray sunbeam, breaking through the foliage, produced that dim, religious light, which an oriel window might admit; and the solemn and impressive silence that prevailed, might lead one to anticipate the pealing of an organ, to speak peace and comfort to the suffering and world-weary, and lift the enraptured soul to heaven.

But it was not by the divine pealing of an organ that the silence of the banyan-tree was at length interrupted; but by a long and wailing cry, that seemed to issue from a breaking-heart; followed by a succession of agonizing shrieks, that too clearly spoke the deadly extremity of the sufferer.

Maddened at the sound, I sprang forward with a velocity that nothing could retard; and, ere long, I beheld a scene which for a moment sent the life-blood retreating to my heart. Julia was kneeling in an imploring attitude at the feet of the Pindarrie, who held her infant, naked, and with its head downwards, in his left outstretched arm; while with his right he

brandished his tulwar, ready to strike the fatal blow upon the screaming innocent, if the decision of its hapless mother was adverse to the demands of the ruthless monster, who was now the uncontrolled master of her destiny.

There was not an instant to be lost. The time required for clearing the space between us would have been fatal, even if my presence was not sufficient of itself to hasten the catastrophe. Summoning, therefore, that coolness in extremity which had never failed me, I brought my rifle to a level, so as to avoid the dear objects of my solicitude; and, in another instant, a ball went crashing through the skull of the ruffian, who fell a lifeless mass upon the sod; while Julia, catching her infant, with a cry of joy and wonder, covered its little body with fond and eager kisses.

I approached slowly, to give the poor mother time to vent her maternal emotions: but when she saw who it really was that had saved her from a more dreadful fate than death itself, the poor soul gave way to the ungovernable impulse of feeling and gratitude; and rushing into my arms, shared her burning kisses between me and her rescued child. At length, recollecting

herself, she withdrew from my embrace, with all the dignity of an English matron; and sinking on her knees, with eyes upturned and streaming with tears, she offered up her mute thanksgiving to that Power which alone could have saved her in so deadly an extremity.

With a feeling of respect, commensurate with the utter helplessness of my *protégée*, and her entire dependence, now, upon my honour, I waited till Julia had finished her prayer; and then, with a cheerful voice, congratulated her on her escape.

"And it is to you, Blake," she replied, "my more than friend,—my dear, dear brother! that I am indebted for this unutterable blessing! Ah! little did I think, during these few days terrible captivity, which appeared to me as so many ages; when incessantly hurried from one place to another, by my ruthless masters; that they fled in terror before the man whom, of all others, I could least expect to take any interest in my fate. Little did I think—but, good heavens! what is the meaning of this? My feet are in the water, though but a moment since I stood upon dry ground! 'Tis like enchantment!"

"I have observed it for some time past, my dear Julia," I replied, with affected unconcern: "the river is rising fast beyond its ordinary level; and the inundation is so vast that I shall not be surprised, if the whole island is speedily submerged."

"Gracious powers!" she exclaimed: "what shall we do then? Must we perish after all?"

"Do not be alarmed, dearest," I replied, "we are perfectly safe here, so long as this noble tree shall bid defiance to the flood, as it has done for ages. Here we are at the original trunk, which has propagated so many staunch supporters, that it is impregnable to such accidents as this; though the decay of age, as you perceive, has hollowed it into various cavities. In one of these we will take shelter, and in perfect safety from the rising tide, wait patiently till our friends come in search of us."

I now assisted Julia to ascend the rough trunk of the banyan tree, whose gnarled and time-fractured exterior offered every facility for that purpose. Before many minutes had elapsed, we were all securely seated in one of its many hollows, at a spot where the interlacing of two or three enormous branches afforded us a firm

and tolerably level footing, far above the encroaching element; whose very perceptible progress, however, Julia continued to gaze on with anxiety and terror.

The day was now waning fast, and the short twilight of the tropics must speedily give way to utter darkness. The necessity, therefore, of passing the night in this strange position, imparted much uneasiness to us both; and though I affected to treat the matter lightly, yet I felt all the gravity of the circumstance, in its various bearings upon Julia and myself.

The consciousness that the woman I had so long adored was now so completely secluded with me from all the world, while her head rested on my shoulder, and her weary eyelids were closing in welcome sleep, imparted a degree of rapture to my breast to which it had been long a stranger; but this was speedily chastened by the thought that she was now the wife of another, and sacred in my eyes by every principle of religion, every tie of honor, and every impulse of manly feeling. What Julia's thoughts may have been on the occasion it would be equally vain and impertinent to inquire; but that her dreams were happy I felt

assured, by the placid smile upon her lovely features, betrayed by a straggling moonbeam as she lay asleep, and all unconscious in my protecting arms.

Amongst the minor considerations which served to render our situation exceedingly irksome, we had neither of us tasted food for the whole day; and I confess to my shame, that visions of roast beef too often mingled with my purest thoughts and most heroic resolutions: nor do I think that Sancho in Barrataria, or Athelstane the Unready, in the burial vault of the monks of St. Edmund's, ever felt more truly desirous of a piece of the chine, or a cut from the sirloin. Julia bore the privation with greater equanimity; satisfied that she could minister to the wants of her infant by that maternal fount supplied by all bountiful nature: and, as she turned aside to fulfil this first of all human duties and delights, I mentally vowed that no act on my part should ever sully the purity of mind she then enjoyed.

Thus wore away this strange eventful night, during which I never once closed my eyes in sleep, but continued looking dreamily into the palpable obscure; which was, however, enlivened

by the flitting of myriads of fire-flies, whose tiny sparkles resembled a whole firmament of infinitesimal stars in rapid and eccentric motion. I deemed my duty but half-performed, if I kept not incessant watch and ward over my helpless and confiding protégés: though, perhaps, the reader will feel disposed to give me but little praise for this, when I honestly tell him that I was regularly victimized by millions upon millions of musquitoes; who seemed amazingly to enjoy the novel treat of a European supper in the dense foliage of a banyan tree.

Towards morning Julia awoke; and objects becoming visible, she was alarmed at the great height attained by the flood, though we still were some feet above its surface. After preparing her and her baby against the explosion, I now fired off both my barrels in succession, in the hope of attracting any of my party that might be within hearing: but I had scarcely done so, when myriads of blue pigeons and vampire-bats, or flying foxes, as they are more generally termed, came flapping and fluttering around us in terror and confusion; while thousands of monkeys hopped about from branch to branch, chattering and making horrible faces at

us, for thus disturbing the peace of their hereditary dominions.

I repeated this experiment two or three times; and at length had the gratification of hearing several shots in return, while prolonged shouts came faintly over the waste of waters.

Relief was now evidently nigh, and hope kept our spirits from sinking; but it was late in the day before our brave fellows could find a boat capable of releasing us from our island prison. The delight with which we could at length distinguish the sound of paddles will be readily conceived; and I confess that I never heard my own name uttered with such perfect satisfaction, as by those well-known voices which now incessantly called out: "Bhote burra salaam, Blake Sahib!" and "Percy Blake! yoix, yoix, tally-ho!"

I repeatedly shouted in turn, which directed our deliverers to our place of refuge; and before long, a boat approached, amidst the half-submerged alleys and arcades of the mighty Kubbeer-bur: it was impelled with rude paddles by some of my European and Sepoy

light Bobs; while a brother-officer sat in the stern-sheets, steering as he best might with a long, unwieldy plank.

We embarked right merrily under the hearty congratulations of our friends, who had been sadly alarmed by my sudden disappearance; and, after a tedious row of an hour, owing to the extreme width and violence of the river, we at length reached the shore. Here we found a palankeen waiting for Julia, and a horse for me; and in another half-hour we reached the bivouac of the party, which was established at some distance from the village, now the undisputed spoil of the vulture and the jackal. With a good substantial fowl curry, and a bottle of Madeira, Julia and I made up for our long previous fast; and we prolonged the pleasure of the night in the midst of our rejoicing friends.

At two o'clock the following morning, we marched from our bivouac, with a long train of heavily-laden elephants, camels, bullocks, and innumerable horses, the valuable fruit of our exploit; and in four days arrived at Nagpore, where we had the gratification to learn

that we had destroyed and dispersed for ever the last of the Pindarrie bands; the leaders of which, Secunder Jah, the Affghan, and the Mahratta Sevajee, had both fallen by my rifle.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MYSTERIOUS SUMMONS.

We were received with every demonstration of joy and triumph at Nagpore; where I was looked upon by the natives as a second Ramchunder, and by my brother officers as a deuced lucky chap, to have had such an opportunity of paying my court to the Burra Sahib. As for the soldiers, they had a week's jollification on the strength of the General's largesse, and the plunder they had picked up after the slaughter of the Pindarries; for the elephants, camels, &c., with their valuable lading, passed into the hands of the prize agent, to be accounted for, perhaps, ten or twenty years after. Some of the men had got their caps full of pearls, and

others had boxes of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, hawking about for sale at any prices they could get for them; while many of their wives were seen strutting about in costly Cashmere shawls, altogether unconscious of their value.

Sir Nicholas Pipkin honestly, but coldly, paid me the thousand rupees promised for the rescue of his wife and child, which I distributed amongst my companions in arms. He also gave a series of entertainments to celebrate their marvellous rescue; and I had once more the happiness to be received by Julia in her splendid mansion as a favoured, and, indeed, as a highly-honoured guest.

But, though Sir Nicholas, or, as he was familiarly called, "old Nick," could not, in common decency, help appointing me to the rank of acting captain, pending the result of an application to the Governor-General for permanent promotion; yet I believe he never forgave me for the night I passed, the reader knows how innocently, with his wife in the banyan tree: for he not only would not offer me a place on his personal staff, as every body expected he would; but he eagerly availed himself

of an opportunity, which soon after occurred, of sending me into honourable banishment.

As this opportunity sprang from the system which has been pursued in India for the multiplication of our enormous territories, from the days of Clive to the present; perhaps the reader, however little disposed to the consideration of Indian affairs, may not dislike a "wrinkle," on so interesting, and, indeed, so picturesque a subject; if I may use that term to anything in the shape of political swindling.

Amongst the petty independent principalities which abound in this part of India, was that of Ruttunpoor; the Rajah of which had been implicated in the hostile proceedings of Apa Sahib, and had once given that ex-sovereign shelter in the course of his flight from the Company's troops. The British having now so completely triumphed at Poona and Nagpore; and, indeed, throughout the whole of this warlike region, it was deemed a favourable opportunity to give the Rajah of Ruttunpoor a good hearty squeeze, if not to crush him altogether.

A vakeel was accordingly despatched to the capital of this doomed monarch, to acquaint him that his complicity with Apa Sahib was

known to the Governor-General: it was further hinted that his Lordship Bahauder was aware of a certain flaw in the Rajah's title to the musnud; and that the rightful heir was living in exile and obscurity. It was not that we cared a rush about the justice of the matter; for one sovereign *de facto* was always, in our eyes, worth fifty sovereigns *de jure*. But the fact gave us an advantage over the Rajah, of which we were determined to avail ourselves.

With this object in view, he was invited to receive a British Resident at his court; an honor which he did not dare to refuse, and one was accordingly sent thither. These Residents who, generally speaking, are nothing more than privileged intriguers, are chosen indiscriminately from the civil and military classes: for wherever a young man evinces a ready talent at acquiring Oriental languages, and an adequate degree of that sort of cunning which Bacon calls "crooked wisdom," he is in a fair way of filling some position of this description, and of becoming sooner or later, as Jack Dillon said, a *milliner*.

The small end of the wedge being thus insinuated into the principality of Ruttunpoor; the Resident who, to do him justice, was emi-

nently fitted for his situation, lost no time in driving it home. He first told the Rajah that he had discovered a dangerous internal conspiracy against him, for the purpose of replacing the rightful heir upon the musnud; and strongly urged him to apply for a subsidiary force of British troops, to guard him against the threatened danger. The Rajah, however, declined this expedient, with many thanks to the Resident for his protecting care.

The latter next got up a little panic about an intended Pindarrie incursion into the country, to plunder and lay waste the Rajah's capital and palace, and again proffered a subsidiary force as the grand panacea: but the Rajah said that the Pindarries were his very good friends; and that he was always in the habit of purchasing their forbearance by the payment of an annual *peishcush*, or tribute.

This was all skilful fencing on the part of the Rajah; but the Resident was not a man to be so easily baffled. He, therefore, sent a private communication to the Rajah of Bopaul, through our Resident at that court; directing him to rake up an old claim of disputed frontier against the Rajah of Ruttunpoor, and to make

a demonstration as if determined to carry the question *vi et armis;* thus making use of one *subsidized* Rajah to *subsidize* another, as tame elephants are employed in the jungle to conquer their savage brethren.

The poor Rajah, at length, worn out by his fears, and the Resident's importunities, began to entertain the notion of the subsidiary force, the only obstacle now being the enormous expense it would entail upon him.

"Bah, bah, your highness! It shan't cost you a single rupee," said the Resident.

The Rajah opened his large eyes in amazement, at this.

"You have, I think," said the Resident, "a district in the Shalabala hills, inhabited by Goands, who never pay their chout as they ought to do."

"They never do," replied the Rajah. "May their sisters be defiled for the same!—unless I enforce it by my troops—a remedy which is worse than the disease."

"That district," said the Resident, "is exactly so many square miles in extent, and it ought to produce so many lakhs of Sicca rupees annually."

"You are quite right in your calculation," said the Rajah, wondering at the accuracy of his information.

"Now, then," continued the Resident; "deducting so many thousand rupees annually, for the expense of collection, and loss by runaways, &c., we shall have a net income from Shalabala of so many hundred thousand; which will just cover the pay and allowances, cost of equipments, clothing, arms, accoutrements, wear and tear, &c., of one thousand British troops—say a thousand:—leaving a small margin, to purchase baubles and lollypops for the Goand chiefs, to keep them in good humour. Now, you make over that district, in full jaghire, to the honourable Company Bahauder; leave the collection of the chout to me—I understand that business—and the troops shall be speedily in full march for your capital."

The Rajah consented—how could he possibly do otherwise? Sir Nicholas Pipkin was directed to organize a subsidiary force for Ruttunpoor; and nine hundred Sepoys, together with my company of Europeans, fifty light dragoons, and a field train of artillery, were marched thither, under the command of Colonel McClish.

The reader is now, I hope, conversant with the *modus operandi* by which we generally gain a firm footing in what are called the subsidized States of India. It may, however, be as well to acquaint him that, when it becomes desirable, in Yankee phrase, to annex said territory to the British possessions, properly so called, the Resident picks a quarrel with the Rajah; generally on the subject of a long arrear of pay and allowances for the subsidiary force; or else of advances to the Rajah out of his own money, with interest and compound interest thereon. Then ensues a long series of bullying, on the one side, and concessions, on the other: till, at last, the unhappy Rajah, finding himself involved in an inextricable web of political legerdemain, and bewildered by the complicated nature of the accounts, perpetually poked before his eyes, in huge iron-bound ledgers; consents, to get rid of the *imbroglio*, to cede his Rajahship, to the Honourable Company Bahauder, in *seculæ seculorum:* in consideration of which, he receives a handsome pension, a small per centage on his own revenues; and retires to the holy city of Benares, where we have frequently more de-

throned sovereigns assembled, as our pensionaries, than ever met together at the carnival of Venice.

Ruttunpoor is in the wildest part of Gundwana, a vast extent of unexplored country, lying to the eastward of Nagpore; amongst the hills and fastnesses of which the Mahanuddy takes its rise, and carries down, in the rainy season, an immense volume of water to the Bay of Bengal; laden with agricultural riches, if it suited the Company's close-borough system to admit of its being turned to purposes of irrigation.

As we marched through this uncivilized region, I was delighted to find myself once more amongst mountains, rocks, lakes, rivers, and waterfalls, and gave a loose to my fancy; depicting to myself the pleasures I should enjoy in my favourite pursuits of hunting, shooting, fishing, and sketching picturesque scenery: in a country so fresh, as it were, from the hand of nature; the savage features and romantic beauties of which were not as yet marred by the money-grubbing pursuits of trade, commerce, and manufactures.

Nor was I disappointed. For the first three

months, I was in a species of Elysium, and shot, fished, and hunted so much; killing so many boars, tigers, and boa-constrictors, that I began to fancy myself almost as great a junglewalla as the mighty Croker himself. I became an immense favourite with the simple inhabitants of the country, who called me the Burra Feringhee Shikar, or Great European hunter: and, as I constantly freed them from the wild beasts that destroyed their gardens, and ruined their harvests; never abused or ill-treated them; and always gave them cherry-merry when they attended my hunting-parties, they looked upon me as one of a superior species to the ordinary run of my countrymen.

Ruttunpoor itself was a large rambling town; consisting, as usual, of lofty pagodas, huge ruts, or procession cars, dusty, hot, oppressive bazaars, green-mantled stagnant tanks, and clay-built houses; the walls of which were plentifully plastered with cow dung, and ornamented with perpendicular stripes of various coloured pigment.

But the palace of the Rajah was its great redeeming feature. This was a lofty and a handsome building, so far, at least, as Hindoo

architecture can be so called; situated on a lovely island in the midst of a splendid lake, that stretched away amongst surrounding hills of great picturesque beauty in form and outline. The palace, covered with polished chunam, of dazzling whiteness, was embowered in extensive gardens; the lofty trees and shady alleys of which, were minutely reflected in the deep blue waters of the lake: and here the fancy might picture to itself the beauties of the Zenana, straying amidst the mazy labyrinth, or gazing complacently at their own lovely forms, in the natural mirror at their feet.

A light built cantonment had been erected for us on a rising ground, on the borders of the lake, commanding the Rajah's palace: a circumstance which he did not at all relish; but his objections were over-ruled by the plausible arguments of Mr. Slimley, our Resident at his court.

This was a skeleton-looking person, of middle age, whom all the good feeding in India had failed to fill out to the ordinary dimensions of the human figure. He was excessively vain, arrogant, and cunning: distrustful to a degree that bordered on monomania, of the intentions

of others, and equally deceitful and treacherous in his own. Being, however, a man of some education and knowledge of the world, he had obtained so complete a mastery over McClish, that in a little time the latter became, through his instigation, utterly detested by every man and officer under his command; while Courts of Inquiry and Courts Martial were of such daily and almost hourly occurrence, that one might say we had been sent to this remote district for the sole purpose of studying the art of tormenting by martial law.

Our mess-room, especially, was made such a focus of intrigue and espionage, that it was absolutely unsafe to sit there long after dinner: but when the Resident dined with us, which he frequently did, we felt as if the very demon of discord was amongst us, *in propria persona.*

My great delight on such occasions, when I could get away after dinner from the Colonel and his Mephistopheles, who were eternally boring me with questions of state policy and diplomatic intrigue, was to rush down to the lake, throw myself into my boat, and push off by myself into the silent waters; paddling occasionally along the glassy surface, and at

times lying down with my face towards heaven, inhaling the delicious breeze of evening, as I woke the surrounding echoes with my flute.

There is something in the contemplation of the starry host, that exalts and purifies the mind: sifting it, as it were, from the worldly dross with which it is so heavily clogged; and fitting it for that celestial intercourse which is the aspiration in every age and clime, of saint, of savage, and of sage. True it is, however, that often, as I gazed upon the chaste, cold moon, as she held her peerless course through the cloudless ether, thoughts of human affections would rush into my breast; and memory, too faithful memory, would conjure up to view the sylph-like forms of the still dear objects of my youthful love: my tender Harriet, my fascinating Mary, my sainted Juliana, and my gentle Julia. But I thought of them as of so many angels, who, though lost to me upon earth, I yet fervently hoped to meet again in heaven.

Often, also, as I floated in the deep shadow of the Rajah's palace, whose luxuriant gardens stretched down to the water's edge; the plantain and the acacia dipping their beautiful leaves in the translucent tide, while the aromatic

fragrance of the night-blowing flowers loaded the sluggish zephyr, that faintly played amongst the branches:—often, I say, when gazing on the marble-like pile, whose glossy surface shone brightly in the moonbeams, as it rose majestically from the dark dense foliage that clung around it lovingly;—often have I thought of the sorrows that haply wrung the breast of many a fair captive, victims to the caprice or jealousy of the ugly old monster, who now held sway within its walls; and, as the wild notes of the Peyoo came gushing from some neighbouring thicket, I would say to myself, "'Tis the last sad wail of some breaking heart!"

On one of these occasions, while paddling slowly by the palace garden, hidden, as I thought, from all eyes, in the broad shadow of its lofty trees, a voice suddenly exclaimed:

"Feringhee! Feringhee Sahib!"

At first I imagined it was only fancy; but the words were repeated in that soft musical voice, peculiar to the Hindoo female; and looking towards the spot whence the sounds appeared to proceed, I observed a figure in white, standing by the water's edge, in the deep shade of a mango-tope.

Predisposed as I was for some romantic

adventure, I instantly pulled for a flight of marble steps that descended deep into the water; and, jumping ashore, found myself close to a young and very handsome woman, whom, in the delirium of the moment, I caught in my arms, and fervently kissed.

But she quickly released herself from my grasp, and exclaimed with a frown, that was almost a smile:

"Acha Ni, Sahib!"

I made a thousand apologies for my rudeness, which, however, I was about to repeat; but she kept me at arm's length, and said with a voice of sweet reproachful gravity:

"Stand back, Feringhee Sahib, and behave yourself; or, I'll have you served as Bum Sah was served by Bulbudder Singh."

"Pray, how was that, you sweet creature?" I demanded, taking a pace beyond the line of demarcation, the better to hear how Bum Sah was served by Bulbudder Singh.

The little gypsey was, however, on the alert, and took a side-step to the rear, as Pat says; preserving her distance with as much precision as if she had been drilled by my old militia friend, Marshal Saxe himself.

"You must know," she replied with arch

gravity, "that Bum Sah was a Goorkha Sirdar, in the army of the Rajah Bulbudder Singh; and a brave and handsome man too, as you yourself, Feringhee Sahib—"

"My dear soul!" I exclaimed, about to make a rush, for all my celestial imaginings had vanished into thin air; but the provoking little jade kept her distance very adroitly, as she went on with her story.

"Bum Sah," she said, "had the temerity to fall in love with one of the Rajah's wives; but the great Bulbudder Singh had him inveigled into this very garden, tied up in a sack, and pitched into the lake, from the very spot on which you now stand."

This was a damper to the most ardent passion; but, still, I was about to continue my approaches, in spite of the horror I always felt at drowning in a sack; when the sweet girl, for such she certainly was, entreated me to be patient, and to answer truly such questions as she should put to me.

"That I will," I replied, "and I swear by the skull chaplet of Doorga!—by the blue throat of Mahadeo!—by the soul-inspiring conch of Vish—"

"Hush, hush!" cried the pretty Hindoo, laying her dear little hand on my lips. "You must never pronounce that sacred name, Feringhee Sahib."

"Then I swear by yourself!" I said, giving her another loving hug, "to answer truly every question you put to me."

"Bhote acha!" she replied. "In the first place, then, do you belong to the Sahib logue?"

"Unquestionably," I said: the blood of the Blakes silently prompting my reply.

"Show me your hands," said the inquisitive monkey.

I held out my hands, and she passed her own little velvet paws over the palms.

"Acha!" she exclaimed, with an accent of satisfaction. "You malluk:* you no working man—you no bunya."

"Heaven forbid!" I replied. "I hate the whole tribe of money-grubbers."

"Are you married?" she next demanded.

"No," I replied; "but hope soon to be with you."

She shook her head as she asked finally:

"Are you brave enough to risk your life

* Of gentle blood.

for the rescue of a beautiful and injured princess?"

"Certainly," I replied, "and I'll convince you of it this instant, if you will step with me into my boat."

"It is not for myself," she replied, "that I ask these questions, but for one a thousand times more good and beautiful than I am; and if you have spirit enough to go with me you shall see and converse with her."

"I'll go with you," I replied, "to the end of the world."

Upon this, the pretty she Mercury clapped her hands thrice; when a dingy-looking figure emerged from among some trees at a little distance, and stood in an attitude of deference and respect.

"Trimbuckjee," said my guide, "take charge of the Feringhee Sahib's boat, and see that it be not discovered. Then wait his return, you know where, and see him safe out of the island."

"Acha! Lachema Beebee," responded the stranger, in a deep voice, the tones of which I thought I recognised, as he glided like a ghost down to the water's edge, and disappeared with my canoe.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RAJPOOTNI.

LACHEMA, then drawing a scarf from her neck, wound it several times round my eyes; and, taking me by the hand, she led me silently on to a chunam walk, along which we glided, as noiselessly as possible, till we came to some obstruction, apparently a door, or gateway. Here she stopped, and whispered softly to me:

"You are about to encounter great dangers; but it is not too late to retract, if you don't feel your heart firm enough to meet them."

"Put your hand on my heart," I replied; "and it will answer your question."

She did so, and said: "I don't think you have any heart at all; for I can't feel it beat."

"It is in your own keeping," I said. "You may do with it what you please."

She pressed my hand almost imperceptibly, and we resumed our progress.

I could perceive that we had now quitted the open air, and were, apparently, going along an enclosed verandah; for I could hear the clang of arms, as if of sentinels relieving in the court-yard; but, as we were not challenged, I concluded we were not visible to them. We ascended one or two flights of steps, and I felt myself in the open air again, as if we had mounted to the roof of the palace; and then we descended down, down, as if plunging into the bowels of the earth.

I frankly confess that the fate of Bum Sah, tied up in his sack at the bottom of the lake, struck, once or twice, discordantly on my fancy; and I was by no means re-assured, by my previous knowledge of the Rajah's truculent character. This might be an episode in some plot of his, to get rid of his subsidiary force, that he might resume the rich Jaghire he had appropriated for their payment; and the dungeon might soon extinguish me, as effectually as the lake did the poor Goorkha Sirdar. But

I have always had unlimited confidence in woman, especially if young and handsome; and, as I felt the pressure of my guide's soft hand, I shook off the horrible imaginings that had, for a moment, disturbed my mind, proceeding boldly to unravel the mystery of the adventure.

At last we stopped; and I could hear the sound of a veena, touched skilfully, and accompanied by a sweet voice, singing a simple, plaintive melody. The heavy purdehs of a doorway, apparently, were then drawn aside; and I was led forward a few steps on a carpet, in whose soft texture I sank almost up to the ancles, in an atmosphere redolent of a thousand perfumes; while the plash of water fell upon my ear with a lulling sound, intermingled with the dying notes of the veena, which ceased altogether, as the scarf fell from my eyes.

In looking round, I found myself in the centre of a small apartment, richly gilt, and adorned with all the minute and delicate tracery and filagree work, peculiar to Oriental taste. A couple of small fountains were playing rose-water into marble basins; and three or four perfuming rods were burning in different directions. At

the farther end of the room, a female figure, closely veiled, was seated on a musnud, or thick, gold-embroidered cushion; and behind her stood four female attendants unveiled, young and handsome, waving snowy white chowries, richly-mounted, over her head. On the right hand side of the principal figure, and at a little distance, stood my pretty conductress, Lachema, in an attitude of respectful humility; her head slightly bent down, and her arms crossed upon her breast.

I made a profound obeisance to this mysterious lady; placing my hand upon my heart, in token of devoted service, and then stood erect to await her commands.

She motioned me to sit down on a musnud, that was placed nearly in her front; and having gathered up my legs tailor-fashion, as well as I could on so unwonted a seat, she touched a little silver gong that stood by her side, with a bar of the same metal. At this signal, the purdehs of a doorway were drawn back, and ten pretty young females entered, bearing silver trays, covered with rich velvet cloths embroidered with pearls; all but the two first, one of whom carried a chillumchee with rose-water, and the other a kincaub napkin of cloth of gold.

Having dipped my fingers into the rose-water, and wiped them with the napkin, the trays were set down before me on the beautiful carpet, and uncovered; they contained a variety of fruits and confections, with three or four goblets of various sorts of sherbet. Some of these I slightly tasted, and sipped a little of the sherbet; when a fresh chillumchee and napkin being handed to me, I performed my ablutions as before, and the whole apparatus was removed in perfect silence and good order.

The veiled lady seemed to derive much satisfaction from the manner in which I went through this first act of the drama, as indicating an acquaintance with the customs of good society; and immediately withdrew the envious screen which had hitherto concealed her peerless features. Peerless, indeed, they were, of the most perfect contour and faultless proportions: while a brighter complexion than that of the fairest Brahminee I had ever seen, imparted to them more than ordinary vivacity; which was chastened and improved by the soft, loveable, expression of her large, gazelle-like eyes.

Whether it was that I regarded the withdrawal of the veil as a tacit challenge, or was electrified by such a blaze of the most perfect beauty, I cannot well say; but I sprang to my feet with the inten-

tion of prostrating myself before the lovely vision. With a smile of ineffable sweetness, however, she motioned me to resume my seat, and I obeyed her as one under the spell of an enchantress.

"Are you," said the beautiful Rajpootni, in a voice of soft melody, "are you the Burra Feringhee Shikar whom they call Blake Sahib?"

"May it please your Highness," I replied, "that is my name."

"I have heard much about you," she was pleased to say. "My people—for you see before you the Beebee of Ruttunpoor—my people tell me that you are as brave as Ramchunder, and as bountiful as Vicramaditya. I have, therefore, sought your assistance in an enterprise of much difficulty and peril: tell me, frankly and boldly, if you feel disposed to accord it."

I arose from my seat, made a profound inclination, placed my hand upon my heart, and said that in all things, and in defiance of every peril, I was ready and willing to obey her commands.

With another smile of heavenly sweetness, the princess, whose high heroic name was Coornandati, thanked me for my ready acquiescence; and then proceeded to explain the nature of the enterprise.

The Rajah, it seems, who then occupied the

musnud, and who was father to the beautiful creature before me, was, as I before hinted, a usurper; his nephew, Pertaub Singh, being the rightful heir, as son to the late Rajah. Pertaub and Coornandati had been betrothed at an early age by that sovereign, who was brother to the present; but the latter, by a piece of treachery common enough in Asiatic courts, had not only set his nephew aside, and driven him into banishment, but also deprived him of his betrothed bride; whom he kept in his palace, a hostage, as it were, for the forbearance of her lover. To rejoin this lover now, though in exile, was the first wish of Coornandati's heart; and to enable her to do this was the service she sought for at my hands.

Though somewhat disappointed, I confess, at being thus called on to convey to another beauty which I coveted for myself, I never hesitated for an instant, but entered zealously into the plan of escape; according to which I was to be ready with a boat, and three or four trusty servants, on the third night thence, at the spot where I had landed, which was a very retired part of the palace grounds. In the meantime, the princess was to give notice of her coming to Pertaub Singh, that he might be ready to meet her on the farthest shore of the

lake, with horses and attendants, to convey her far beyond the reach of her cruel parent.

All points being adjusted, the Princess again struck the silver gong, and two female attendants entered; one of whom bore a silver tray, containing the usual offering of pawn-siparee, or beetle-nut, the ordinary manner in which visitors are licensed to depart from the royal presence. But, instead of allowing a menial to present it, the Princess, as an especial mark of honor, arose from her musnud, thereby displaying a majestic figure of faultless symmetry and proportions: with a bewitching smile, she handed me the salver herself; while, with bended knee, I accepted the gracious compliment, and thus took leave of the lovely Coornandati, whose hand I was graciously permitted to kiss.

I was led out by my pretty conductress, Lachema; but, as a delicate proof of confidence, I was not, on this occasion, blindfolded as before, and, therefore, had an opportunity of admiring many of the beauties of the palace. Indeed, I rather prolonged this indulgence; less, perhaps, to gratify my taste for Oriental art, than for the pleasure of flirting a little with my pretty guide.

At the outer gate, Lachema gave me in

charge to the male attendant I before had a glimpse of; and in him, to my surprise, I recognised a brother-sportsman, named Trimbuckjee, who had frequently assisted at my hunting-matches. Indeed, I began now to suspect that he had been sent thither expressly to sift my character and disposition; and this I found was the fact, for he was a prime confident of the Princess Coornandati. This trusty fellow led me to my boat, which he had effectually concealed under the wide-spreading branches of an enormous fig-tree; and, having given him a suitable largesse, I returned unobserved to cantonments.

The following day, I received a visit from Trimbuckjee; who, having satisfied me by his credentials that he was fully authorized by the Princess to act in the matter, we concocted between us a final plan of proceedings. In pursuance of this, on the third night after, at twelve o'clock precisely, for the Hindoos are an early people in retiring, I arrived at the same spot of the Rajah's garden, with a larger and more commodious boat; accompanied by my pay-sergeant and three trusty Light Bobs, with their arms and accoutrements; ready, in every respect, to act against any enemy whom I might indicate as such.

We had not waited here above five minutes, when the lovely Rajpootni arrived, with Lachema,

and Trimbuckjee her only attendants. I handed her into the boat, and Lachema and Trimbuckjee followed: the latter placed himself in the stern sheets to steer; my trusty Light Bobs grappled the muffled oars, at which they were very expert, and, amidst the most profound silence, we were soon beyond the reach of pursuit.

After a pretty sharp row of nearly two hours, we at length reached our destination; where we found the young prince waiting for us, with a souwarrie of thirty mounted Rajpoots, determined-looking fellows, all armed to the teeth: there were also two kujavas, or carriages slung between camels,—an expeditious mode of travelling in the East,—for the accommodation of the Princess and Lachema.

Pertaub Singh, was really a fine-looking fellow; upwards of six feet high, elegantly formed, and of a majestic presence. When the Princess introduced me, as her rescuer from captivity, he immediately took off his richly-jewelled turban, and laid it at my feet; the greatest compliment in the East that one human being can pay to another. With every mark of profound respect, I took the turban from the ground, and replaced it on the head of the Prince; who then embraced me, exclaiming in a fine, manly voice,—

"Noble Feringhee, fortune has placed it out of my power at present to acknowledge the deep debt of gratitude I owe you: but you have given into my possession a treasure more precious than the heaven of Indra; and if I ever forget it may the fires of Patala burn me hereafter, and for evermore!"

"Blake Sahib," said the Princess, "accept this trifle from me, as a slight token of my gratitude." Then, taking a bracelet from her arm, she clasped it on the wrist of my right hand; exclaiming, with a smile that is still fresh in my memory: "Now you are my Rakhee-bund Bâe."*

Thus I parted from the illustrious Rajpoots, whom I then saw for the last time; and after a rapid row across the lake we arrived at cantonments, unobserved by all, except a couple of drowsy Sepoy sentries, who naturally concluded that we had been out on duty. On going to my room, my pay-sergeant showed me a bag of two hundred rupees, which Trimbuckjee had put into his hand when coming away, as cherry-merry, he said, for the rowers; and thus terminated, for the present, an adventure which had originally promised, as I thought, a very different *dénouement*.

* Bracelet-bound brother.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALPHABET HOPKINS.

THE sudden and unaccountable disappearance of the Beebee of Ruttunpoor caused, as may be imagined, a degree of wonder and consternation, not only in the palace but throughout the country; unequalled since the abduction of Sita, by the ten-headed giant of Lankadwipa. Nine people out of ten looked upon it as a supernatural event altogether; an escapade of Mahadeo, out on the loose from his jealous consort, and longing for a mortal mistress of such unequalled charms. But the Rajah was of a different opinion, and so was the Resident; both being somewhat sceptical on points of mythology, and even more than doubtful about spiritual interference in mundane matters generally—especially in the abduction of pretty young women.

These two astute persons, therefore, laid their heads together, with a view to discover the retreat

of the princess; as also to outwit each other, and gain some personal advantage, in the course of the inquiry. The Resident was not long in fixing upon me, as in some way or other connected with this mysterious affair: taking up the matter, therefore, in a jocular strain, he said, shaking his lanky sides with affected laughter,

"Blake, my dear boy, you are such a rolicking fellow, and such a favourite with the ladies, that I'll lay my life you know something of the matter. Come, let us have the particulars: 'tis a capital joke, to be sure, to carry off the heiress of that old curmudgeon. Your countrymen, we know, are famous for running away with heiresses Ha! ha! ha!"

But there was a lurking devil in his eye, that kept me wide awake to his treachery, and I turned off the joke upon himself, with a little of his own persiflage, which nettled him exceedingly; though he still maintained the mask, and appeared even more friendly and familiar than ever. A thousand conjectures were hazarded on the subject at mess, but all equally absurd and wide of the mark; the Colonel profoundly remarking that it was probably one of those hyrcaniums of natur that would never be enveloped, like Junius with the iron mask, and the magical books of Sybil Grey.

At length the mystery was solved by the arrival of a vakeel from the court of Oodipoor; where Pertaub and the princess had taken refuge with their kinsman, the Rana of that state, which was under the Company's protection, though not yet subsidized.

The vakeel was the bearer of a message from his Highness, Pertaub Singh, legitimate Rajah of Ruttunpoor, to the usurper, Gorumchunder; summoning him to vacate the musnud of that state within the period of three lunar months, under penalty of being punished as a contumacious rebel to his rightful sovereign. Promising him, in the event of due and prompt compliance with this royal mandate, a pension befitting the uncle and father-in-law of the Rajah aforesaid: that he might retire to the holy city of Benares, and live there in ease and luxury, with other ex-sovereigns; who, tired of the cares of royalty, had yielded their crowns and sceptres to their dearly beloved ally, the Honorable Company Bahauder: resting perfectly satisfied that, when death should come to them in that divine abode, which was formed of musk instead of common earth, and supported upon the trisul of Mahadeo, their next transmigration must necessarily be happy; if even it did not amount to final absorption into the essence of the deity, which

all good Hindoos look forward to as the consummation of eternal bliss.

His Highness, the Rajah Pertaub Singh, further acquainted the usurper, Gorumchunder aforesaid, that the final nuptial rite had passed between him and the Beebee Coornandati, in the great temple of Vishnu, at Oodipoor: that her Highness, now Ranee of Ruttunpoor, sent her dutiful and affectionate respects to her father, aforesaid; and besought him, of all good-will and loving kindness, to comply at once with the demand of her husband and sovereign, the only legitimate Rajah of Ruttunpoor, Pertaub Singh, Bahauder Jung, Protector of the stars, Grasper of the lightning, &c.

The explosion of wrath which shook the frame of the old usurper, on receipt of this lofty mandate, was absolutely tremendous. He smashed to atoms, with his battle-axe, the valuable crystal bell of the hookah he was smoking; a present, by the way, from the Honourable Company Bahauder; he ordered the vakeel to be stitched up in a sack, and sent to the bottom of the lake, to keep company with Bum Sah; and directed thirty of his daughter's female attendants to be buried alive, for not discovering their mistress's intended flight.

The ladies very stoutly declared their readiness

to die; but, as pure Rajpootnis, they never would betray their salt. Their heroism was, accordingly, on the point of being put to this formidable test, when the Resident, who had been apprized of the posture of affairs, arrived in his state barge; demanded a private audience of the usurper; told him plainly that he must, on no account, lay violent hands on the vakeel of a State under the Company's protection; and that, for every individual murder he might commit, even in his own palace, he would be tried by the laws of England, and dealt with accordingly.

This drove the old man frantic: he danced about the room, tore down the window-curtains, smashed the valuable English chandelier, and swore, by the skull-chaplet of Doorga, that if the Resident presumed to utter another word on such matters, he would have him stitched up in the same sack with the vakeel, and they might compare notes together at the bottom of the lake.

"Will your Highness do me the favour," said the Resident, very coolly, "to look out of this window, and tell me what you see on yonder rising ground?"

"What do I see?" cried the Rajah, foaming with rage; for he had taken a more than usual dose of opium that morning, and it was now in

full operation; "I see your cursed cantonment, of course."

"What do you see in front of that cantonment?" asked the Resident, very demurely.

"I see a battery of three twelve-pounders, three nines, six sixes, and two howitzers," replied the Rajah, with astonishing accuracy for an Asiatic prince.

"If I am not back in the cantonment in half an hour from this," said the Resident, very composedly, looking at his watch; "those guns and howitzers are to open instantly on your palace, and knock both you and it into a million fragments."

This was an *argumentum ad hominem* which the Rajah could not get over: he threw himself upon an ottoman, covered his face with a kincaub napkin; and, after five minutes profound meditation, rose with the most calm and gentlemanly deportment, shook the Resident cordially by the hand, and said that everything should be settled according to his wish.

Slimley, whose great boast it was that nobody had ever yet surpassed him in gentlemanly deportment, returned the Rajah's pressure with interest; assured him of protection against all the machinations of Pertaub Singh, and further told him that he had a clue to the principal agent in his

daughter's flight, who should be punished to his heart's content. In the evening, Slimley told us at mess as much of this interview as he thought proper; and on this occasion he was so kind, so friendly, and indeed so affectionate towards myself in particular, that I began to think I had mistaken his character, and that so much candour could not possibly conceal an *arrière pensée* to my disadvantage.

The following morning, while I was admiring the bracelet bestowed upon me by the princess of Ruttunpoor, which was of real diamonds, worth, as I supposed, four or five thousand rupees, the Tappall arrived; and, amongst my letters, there was one from the head-quarters of the Governor-General, which were then on the banks of the Chumbul. Wondering what correspondent I could have in that distinguished quarter, I broke the seal; and, running my eye down to the bottom of the page, I saw that it came from Alphabet Hopkins.

This very unexpected epistle was conceived in the following terms:

"My dear Blake,

"Acting as Military Sec., pro. tem., in the absence of Colonel Galt, a secret report, of

which you are the object, has necessarily passed through my hands, in its progress to the eyes of the Governor-General.

"Without stopping to animadvert on the nefarious system of secret-reporting, which has crept into the army, heaven knows how, though fit only for the Spanish Inquisition; I hasten to send you a copy of this atrocious document; which, without containing a single distinct or properly-defined charge, has, by its vague generalities, cast such a mesh of inferences around you, as may be productive of ill consequences if not at once met and refuted. It purports to come from your own commanding officer; but I suspect that limb of Satan, Slimley, has had more than one finger in the pie; therefore be on your guard against his proffered friendship.

"I need not hint to you that I should like my name not to appear in this transaction; but if it be necessary for your justification, make use of it and welcome.

"Your late exploit in rescuing Lady Pipkin from the Pindarries is much talked of here, and lauded by all, not excepting your old antagonist, and now

"Faithful friend,

"G. W. B. A. C. HOPKINS."

The enclosure was certainly conceived in the most wily and Jesuitical terms, that ever disciple of Machiavel put upon paper; the composition being far beyond the ability of poor McClish. It represented me as always in the jungle, surrounded by hosts of wild and warlike natives, whose ill-feeling towards the reigning Rajah was patent to all: that I had made myself excessively popular with all the subsidiary force, men and officers, Europeans as well as natives; that, instead of sitting with my brother officers at the mess of an evening, I was in the constant habit of paddling my boat round the Rajah's palace and gardens in the lake, as if to reconnoitre points of attack, &c., &c.,; and that, under all the circumstances of the case, seeing that a desperate pretender was actually hatching plots to disturb the settlement of the country, which was the most conformable to the wishes and interests of the Honourable Company, he, Colonel McClish, could no longer refrain from bringing to the notice of the Governor-General the very suspicious conduct of Acting Captain Blake; especially as he was a young man of wild, enthusiastic notions, capable of any enterprize, however desperate, in pursuit of a fanciful theory of military heroism; altogether at variance with

the fixed and settled principles of our diplomatic relations with the Protected States of Central India. Finally, without asserting that Acting Captain Blake was actually influenced by any sinister views or motives, it might perhaps be as well to advert to the difficulties, troubles, and losses, occasioned at different times by desperate adventurers, both English and French, who had deserted from our service to that of certain native powers in India; and especially during the government of one of his lordship's predecessors, the most noble the Marquis Wellesley.

"My excellent Hopkins!" I exclaimed, after the first ebullition of wrath and astonishment had subsided, "your name shall certainly not appear in this transaction;" and I wrote him a letter to that effect, full of the gratitude which I really felt for his kind intervention. I then drew up a copy of the secret report, and sent it direct to Colonel McClish; with a letter, demanding if it was a true copy of any document forwarded by him to the Governor-General; and if so, calling upon him to forward charges against me, which I was prepared instantly to meet.

After four or five hours deliberation, during which Slimley and the Colonel were closeted

together, I received a communication from the latter; in which, shirking altogether my demand for a court-martial, he called upon me to state immediately, and in writing, the source from which I had derived the presumed copy of his secret report.

I instantly replied that I would not give him the required information; but that his silence leaving me no room to doubt the authenticity of the document in question, I must reiterate my demand for a court-martial.

In answer to this, the Adjutant was sent to my quarters, with instructions to insist on my compliance with the commanding officer's demand; for which he was to wait ten minutes, and in default thereof he was to place me in arrest.

During this brief space, the Adjutant and I chatted together on indifferent subjects; and when the ten minutes had expired, I delivered up my sword, declared my firm intention never to discover by what means I had obtained the copy of the secret report, and once more demanded a court-martial on my conduct.

For a fortnight or three weeks I remained thus in a state of suspense; at the end of which period the following General Order was promulgated and transmitted for my guidance.

"GENERAL ORDER.

"Camp on the Chumbul.

"Acting Captain Blake is released from arrest, and will return to his duty.

"As Acting Captain Blake is now effective in the first battalion of his regiment, he will proceed to Europe forthwith to join that battalion.

"This officer will accordingly hold himself in readiness to proceed to the Presidency, there to wait the departure of the next Company's ships for Europe."

I was thus about to be got rid of by a side-wind. But, resolving not tamely to be treated in this summary manner, I drew up and forwarded direct an appeal to the Governor-General; in which I brought before his Excellency every possible argument against a decision which must necessarily be injurious to my future military prospects. This appeal was couched in language which I vainly imagined would not only satisfy the judgment, but touch the heart of the Governor-General; but the only answer I received was the following coldly official letter from the Acting Military Secretary:

"Sir,

"In reply to your letter to his Excellency the

Governor-General, I have it in command to say, that it should have been forwarded in the usual channel, through your commanding officer, and the General of Division at Nagpoor.

"Under the circumstances, however, and in order to prevent delay, I am directed to inform you that the Governor-General has nothing to add to the Order already issued in your case.

"I have the honour, &c.,
"G. W. B. A. C. Hopkins,
"Acting Military Secretary, *pro tem.*

Under the same official cover, I found the following private note:

"My dear Blake,

"Painful as it was to me to pen the accompanying official, you are too well acquainted with the service not to know that I had no alternative.

"I hasten, however, to tell you that, although Slimley and Co. have declared themselves in possession of the fullest evidence of your agency in the flight of the Rajah's daughter, no despatch whatever, either public or private, is going home from this, likely in the slightest degree to militate against your future prospects.

"Under these circumstances, my dear fellow,

I put it to your own good sense, whether it is not better to cry quits with enemies who are too powerful for you, too vindictive, and too unscrupulous in their means of annoyance. You have already gained a virtual triumph in being released from arrest, without even a reprimand, which throws all the odium of the transaction upon your adversaries. Consider, my dear Blake, that the war in India is at an end—there are no more Pindarries to shoot, and no more Pipkins to roost with in the banyan tree! Aha! old fellow, have I got you there on the hip? Seriously, be advised; it is the opinion of many long heads in my department, and I hope will soon be your own.

"Many thanks for not blabbing; it is what I fully expected from your manly character.

"Yours, ever faithfully,

"G. W. B. A. C. HOPKINS."

But I fear I have become tedious, in my wish to make the reader acquainted with the base system of secret reporting, which once prevailed in the British army, and of which the foregoing narrative is an "ower true tale." To be brief, then, I at length embraced the opinion of Hopkins, and wrote to him to that effect. I then arranged my affairs: gave over my company of Light Bobs,

with many a sincere regret on both sides; and, having taken an affectionate leave of my brother officers, who, one and all, with the exception of the Colonel's little clique, accompanied me on the first stage of my journey, I set off Tappall for Madras; my baggage being reduced to a convenient weight and compass for half a dozen Bangywallas.

When I reached the Presidency, which I did without any adventures worth recording, I learned that the ships were not expected from China, for five or six weeks; to my great joy, therefore, as this period was likely to hang heavy on hands, I found that my old friend Croker had also arrived on sick leave, from another part of the field-force; and greatly surprised he was to hear of my misadventures.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAUL-COPRA BAZAAR.

CROKER and I lived together in Black Town, very properly so called, within a few paces of the *Laul-copra* Bazaar, the hottest, the noisiest, and the dustiest market in all Asia; which, according to my old friend McCracken's phrase, is "saying a muckle deal." Our house, consisting of three rooms, a bath, and a verandah, was all on the ground floor: the verandah was open to, and on a level with the street; and this being the principal thoroughfare to the market, our after-breakfast perambulations were not unfrequently interrupted by a furious charge of hairy sheep, or staring buffaloes; who sometimes even forced an entrance into our *salle-à-manger*, to the great endangerment of our glass shades and tea equipage.

I disliked the place very much myself, and often

proposed to Croker that we should pitch our tents on the south beach; where, at least, we should have the sea-breeze to refresh us, and the mountain surf to gaze at; as it sent the Masoolah boats, with fearful velocity, high and dry upon the sands, or pitched its catamarans aloft, like straws upon "the vexed Bermoothes."

But Croker had got hold of a dozen *jungle-wallahs*, who paid him regular visits every market day; and he would sit squat upon his hams with these fellows for hours together, jabbering Malabars and Telinga; about bears and boars, and peacocks and jungle-fowl, and cheetahs and antelopes; till I would mount my nag in despair, and canter off to the fort, or the Mount-road, in the sun; to the amazement of old Indians, who scarcely dared to venture out in their palanquins or bullock-bandies.

One morning, as we paraded up and down this verandah of ours, standing by for a bolt, should any of our hairy visitants make a plunge at us; to my great astonishment, in walked Trimbuckjee, with a very elaborate salaam to myself, and the great Feringhee jungle-wallah, Croke Sahib, with whose name and fame he seemed to be quite familiar.

Having introduced Trimbuckjee to our parlour, I insisted on his sitting down in a chair; though,

with characteristic modesty, he would have stood, or squatted himself down upon the chunam floor, which, in this *casa* of ours, was sadly dilapidated; displaying a variety of cracks, fissures, and small gulfs, for the reception of dust, cockroaches, centipedes, lizards, &c., &c.

After refreshments had been offered to Trimbuckjee, and sparingly partaken of by him, I inquired about the health and welfare of his master and mistress; and he immediately gave me a narrative which very much surprised Croker and myself.

Soon after my departure from Ruttunpoor, it seems, Prince Pertaub Singh, finding by the shifts and delays of his father-in-law, that he was not likely to give up the musnud peaceably, appealed to the patriotism of his adherents. The consequence was that the whole country flew to arms, to put down the usurper; the cantonments were surrounded, and though the troops were not attacked, their supplies were cut off. All communication was intercepted with Nagpoor, and there is no knowing to what extremities matters might have proceeded; but, at this critical period, Slimley, influenced by his own personal fears, betrayed his interesting protégé, Gorumchunder, into the hands of his son-in-law; who was forthwith installed as the legiti-

mate sovereign of the country, taken under the protection of the Honorable Company Bahauder, and peace, tranquillity, and general happiness fully restored. The life of Gorumchunder was not only preserved from the fury of the people by his generous son-in-law, but he was sent with a handsome pension to Benares; where, by the last accounts, he had become excessively devout, spending the whole of his time and income in the unbridled enjoyment of opium, tomtoms, dancing girls, and religious processions.

"The Rajah and Ranee," continued Trimbuckjee, in his best English, "send plenty compliments to you, Blake Sahib, and plenty sorry for the trouble of their beloved friend."

"I am deeply indebted to their Highnesses, Trimbuckjee," I replied, "for their kind remembrance of me. 'Tis a rose-bud in the desert of my grief—a nightingale in the garden of my happiness."

"They not write, Sahib," returned Trimbuckjee, after a profound salaam, "fear of doing you bad; but something I got here his Highness hope you take for love of him and Princess Coornandati."

Here Trimbuckjee produced from the multi-

tudinous foldings of his turban, a small piece of a goose-quill, stopped at both ends with wax.

"What, Trimbuckjee!" I exclaimed, laughing, "has the Rajah sent me a dose of poison?"

"Ho! Sahib," replied Trimbuckjee, very sententiously. "You right; 'tis poison, and 'tis not poison, all de same how you use it."

"Well, my good friend," I exclaimed, "I confess I cannot understand the marvellous properties of that which is, and at the same time is not poison.

"There it is, Sahib," said Trimbuckjee, unfolding the contents of the quill. "You may make that poison if you like; but me tink you know better."

It was a hoondie, or bill of exchange, on the principal Armenian house in Black Town, for ten thousand rupees.

"Oh! my generous Rajpoot!" I exclaimed. "Indeed I cannot accept this bounty of his. I am already more than rewarded for my trifling services by the splendid present of her Highness, and the distinguished honour it has conferred upon me. Therefore, Trimbuckjee, take it back with my grateful thanks—"

"That," interrupted Trimbuckjee, "would cost

me my life. When I come away, Rajah make me swear upon de Shastras, dat I no leave you quiet till you take Hoondie."

"It can't be helped, Trimbuckjee," I said, "you must be foresworn then, for I cannot take it."

"But dat not all, Sahib," returned Trimbuckjee. "Rajah know you not like take money, all same as one bunya; den he tink first send you jewels and diamonds; but den he say you robbed and swindled, and after all money is best, and he swear himself by Shastras, if you not take, he will cut off my head.

"Then Trimbuckjee," I replied, "you must go headless to Indra's heaven, for I cannot accept this money; and I'm sure my friend Croker is entirely of my opinion."

"By Jupiter, then, I'm not!" said Croker, with vivacity. "See here, now, Percy Blake, this is the state of the case: through your means, the Rajah has got a most beautiful wife, who might otherwise have pined to death in her cruel captivity."

"Dat plenty true, Croke Sahib," said Trimbuckjee.

"Not only that," continued Croker; "but he has alo recovered his kingdom, for which he did

not dare to strike a blow while she was a prisoner."

"Acha, Sahib!" chimed in Trimbuckjee. "No pundit in all Benares can say better dan Croke Sahib."

"Now I understand," said Croker, "that the revenue of Ruttunpoor is a crore and a half——"

"Two crore," interrupted Trimbuckjee; "two crore, every cowrie of it, Croke Sahib."

"Now only think," continued Croker, "what a mere flea-bite ten thousand rupees is, out of such a revenue as that."

"Acha! Croke Sahib! Bhote acha!" cried Trimbuckjee.

"Then, again," resumed Croker, "think what an insult you would offer to the proudest people on earth, if you reject the gift of this noble Rajpoot; who has received from you the service of a hero, and repays it like a generous monarch."

"Jey Baldeo!" exclaimed Trimbuckjee. "You plenty too much sense got, Croke Sahib. Me tink you find one muntra* in jungle, when you hunt ashgur and nilgaw."

In short, I was at length prevailed on by these two special pleaders, and at length accepted the hoondie, which removed a load of cares and

* A wisdom-giving spell.

anxieties from the mind of Trimbuckjee. He accordingly went on his way rejoicing, the bearer of two very grateful letters from me to the Rajah and Ranee; written in my very best Hindostanee, with a broad-nibbed reed pen, that would have been a treasure to Jean Jacques, when he copied music for his livelihood.

A few days after the departure of Trimbuckjee, Croker exclaimed as we sat down to breakfast, rubbing his hands in high glee,—

"Percy, my boy, I have such a treat for you!"

"What is it?" I asked.

"You are always wishing for a change," he replied; "going to this tope, or to that pagoda, and all the rest of the balderdash; as if any rational being ever wished to go anywhere but the jungle."

"Quite a rational place of amusement," I said.

"Now, I'll tell you where we'll go to," continued Croker; "for you're a good boy, Percy, in spite of your sneering. We'll go to Pulicat."

"Where is Pulicat?" I demanded.

"Oh, Jupiter!" exclaimed Croker; "you don't know where Pulicat is; and you a poet, and painter, and all the rest of the balderdash."

"Well," I replied, "I have some faint recollection of having read that Pulicat was one of the

original Dutch settlements on the Coromandel coast, where they made the famous Pulicat handkerchiefs——"

"And all the rest of the balderdash," exclaimed Croker, breaking in abruptly, "that you read of in books. Did any one, I wonder, ever learn anything useful from books? I never did, for I never read one in my life. Talk, man, talk is the thing to drive sense into a fellow's noddle; learn Telinga and Malabars, and talk with the Jungle-wallahs; them's the fellows."

"But what of Pulicat?" I demanded.

"Why, it's the loveliest lake you ever saw in your life," he replied: "a sheet of water a hundred miles in circumference, as smooth as a mill-pond; and fringed all round with a belt of the most beautiful jungle, twenty miles across; swarming with peacocks, jungle fowl, flamingoes, florikens, and the most lovely boars, with tusks five inches long, that would rip you up before you could say Jack Robinson."

"That *is* an inducement," I replied.

"Silence, you monkey!" exclaimed Croker, absolutely foaming with the *onction* of his eloquent description — "antelopes, cheetahs, and black bears."

"Are there any boa-constrictors?" I asked.

"Oh, by Jupiter!" replied Croker; "see if I don't get you one to sit upon, as big as the last. But you'll come, Percy, won't you?" he continued, in a wheedling tone; "just for a week's sport or so."

"With all my heart," I replied. "Any where is better than the Laul-Copra bazaar in the hot winds."

We made our preparations accordingly; and, in a day or two set off with rifles, fowling-pieces, shot-bags and game-bags, hams, tongues, Bengal-humps, Laul Shraub, Tiger's milk, &c., &c., attended by a score of dogs of all breeds and nations, with as many peons, maty-boys, and cowrie-coolies. We looked like a Scythian migration from one of the steppes of Tartary, going to seek a new settlement in some fresher desert.

After a pleasant passage of six hours, by the canal, from Madras, we at length arrived, with bag and baggage, scrip and scrippage, guns and dogs:

> "Mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
> And cur of low degree,"

at the Kerrimungalum, or, as it is called by Europeans, the Bentinck bungalow, on the Eastern

side of the lake; where, without let or hindrance, we established our head-quarters.

My dubash, Mooto kistna, having hunted up a couple of fine fowls and some eggs in a neighbouring village, soon manufactured a delectable curry for us; which, with a fry of fish from the lake, varied with cold tongue and Bengal hump, satisfied the cravings of the inward man. We then adjourned to a finely chunamed verandah; where each with a tcheroote in his mouth, and his legs cocked up on the balustrade; one with a glass of sangaree before him, and the other a ditto of brandy-paunee, we enjoyed amazingly the scene before us.

The opposite, or western shore of the lake, which is here about three miles wide, was flat; and seemed prettily diversified with hamlets and villages, embowered in the deep shade of mango and tamarind groves, which were charmingly reflected in the glassy bosom of the water; and over these at some distance, a majestic range of mountains stretched their blue vapoury outline on the horizon To the left stood the ancient and almost uninhabited town of Pulicat, nearly hidden by its surrounding foliage; over which peeped the dome of a mosque, the tiny spire of a christian church and the urns that crowned a few lofty tombs

wherein reposed the ashes of the earliest European settlers on this side of India. To the right, or north of our bungalow, the lake stretched away to a distance of forty miles; its shores fringed with masses of deep foliage, which vanished by degrees in the vapoury distance, where the waters seemed to lave the base of a lofty chain of cerulean mountains that bounded the prospect.

The surface of this splendid piece of water was diversified with several islands, all luxuriantly wooded; and as we gazed on the magnificent view, we laid our plans for the morrow's sport, in that wonderfully attractive jungle, which seemed to offer its woodland charms to our acceptance in such glorious profusion. Happily, as if to facilitate our project, a handsome boat lay moored close to the sandy beach, that bounded the green slope which stretched from our bungalow down to the water side: this, on inquiry, we found belonged, together with the bungalow, to the Madras government; and the peon in charge of the whole gave us *carte blanche* in the use of both, for a few of those rupees that work such wonders in the East.

We lost no time in availing ourselves of the sylvan pleasures within our reach; ploughing the peaceful waters of the lake with adventurous prow

in all directions, and living for three or four days together in the wild recesses of the jungle; slaughtering in that time more of the *feræ naturæ* than any two idle gentlemen in the whole Carnatic.

During this period we returned occasionally to Bentinck bungalow; to recruit our stock of European luxuries, and to despatch presents of game to our numerous friends at Madras, and other places in its vicinity: also to receive and answer such letters on business, or pleasure, as might find us out in our solitude. These duties despatched, we returned with increased zest to our beloved jungle.

At length the approach of the North-West Monsoon warned me to return to Black Town, that I might be ready to embark without delay; as the arrival of the China fleet was looked for every instant, and ships never stopped long during that season, at their dangerous anchorage in the roadstead of Madras.

Croker, however, prevailed on me to have one or two days more sport, and we accordingly started one morning for the extreme confines of the lake, about forty miles distant; our only companion being Mustapha Beg, or big, as we called him, from his diminutive size. This was a Mussulman maty-

boy of Croker's; who was very smart in handling the sails, tending the rigging, and running aloft to overhaul tacks and sheets, that sometimes got foul in our manœuvres: more especially, and, though last not least, of his qualifications, he was an admirable hand at a curry.

After a good long sail, for there was not much of a breeze, we at length arrived at a part of the jungle that was altogether fresh ground to us; and immediately plunged into its recesses, with that undefinable feeling of delight which the free and independent enjoyment of Nature, in all her primeval rudeness, never fails to inspire.

I only wish the reader could have seen us in this savage life of ours; that surpassed, in simple physical enjoyment, any other description of life with which I am acquainted. We prepared for the labours of the day by an early and substantial breakfast of tea, coffee, eggs, curry and rice, and wild-boar steaks, the most delicious thing in the whole range of gastronomy. We then struck into the woods, with dogs and guns, rifle and fowling-piece each; which, with game-bags and shot-belts, were carried for us by such jungle-wallahs as we pressed into the service; who also carried our game as it fell before us—peacocks, florikens, antelopes, boars, &c.—for we rarely stooped to smaller prey.

This we continued till five or six o'clock, going over an immense space of ground in the interim: being generally sheltered from the sun by the tamarind, mango, banyan, and numerous other lofty trees; and plunging into the lake, as the windings of our course brought us occasionally upon its woody banks. We then returned to our bivouac; where Mustapha had our table-cloth spread under the huge branches of a wide-spreading tree, and loaded with all sorts of roast, and boiled, and broiled, and devilled, and barbecued comestibles; till jaded appetite cried "hold! enough!" Then, with coffee, delicious fruit, pure Madeira, and Bengal tcheroots, we concluded the happy day; and at ten o'clock retired to our boat, where we slept secure and undisturbed till morning, beneath a simple awning of cotton.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BREAK-UP OF THE MONSOON.

THE latter part of this, our last day, had been uncommonly sultry: the breeze had died away, and an almost suffocating heat compelled us to throw off every article of dress which we could do without; as we sat enjoying our cheroots and brandy-paunee, after a late and excellent jungle-dinner; in which the culinary powers of Mustapha had been exerted to the utmost, and nothing had been left undone to tempt the flagging appetite to the high top-gallant of gastric happiness.

But a nervous restlessness still marred the fruition of our festive pleasure. Every now and then a hollow gust would sweep moaning, as it were, amongst the heavy foliage that surrounded us; and, again subsiding, would leave us sweltering in intolerable heat. Occasionally, a few large drops

of rain would come pattering amongst the leaves, spreading around a momentary freshness; to be instantly succeeded, however, by a close and fetid atmosphere, charged with mephitic miasma, and bearing upon its sluggish tide myriads of musquitos, sand-flies, and flying-bugs; the latter incessantly flouncing into our tumblers, and causing an immediate necessity for a fresh brew.

There was a strange unwonted sound also in the jungle; which I can no otherwise describe than as a congregating, and a creeping-together of all its savage denizens, to hold a hushed and terrified consultation on some approaching convulsion of nature, that was taming their innate ferocity, and driving them into unnatural fellowship; while, loud and stern, the deep, hoarse croaking of ten thousand bull-frogs soared painfully over the "whispering silence," in a dismal and ominous thorough bass.

"Acha ni, Sahib!" said Mustapha, with a suspicious glance at the heavens, which still displayed a clear, unclouded field of ether. "Spose master like go now; by-me-by plenty bobbery come."

We lingered, however, for another hour; talking over the pleasures of the day, and the occupations of the morrow; and we then prepared to depart for the shelter of our bungalow, which

we began already to wish for. Everything was, therefore, huddled into the baskets with very little ceremony; the baskets bundled into the boat, the dogs impatiently scrambling in altogether, yelping and floundering in the water: the painter was then cast loose, from the stem of a cocoa-nut tree, to which our vessel had been moored; and, jumping aboard ourselves, we pushed off from the shore.

Our boat was one of the flat-bottomed class, in general use upon the lake; which, abounding in shoals and shallows, requires vessels of small draught for its difficult, and sometimes dangerous navigation. It was cutter-rigged, with a heavy mast and booms, a very large fore-and-aft mainsail, and a large mizen-sail. It was, in fact, over-rigged and top-heavy, not having sufficient hold of the water to counter-balance the strain aloft; but it being almost a dead calm, we had every stitch of canvass spread, in hopes to catch the faint breeze that scarcely rippled the smooth surface of the lake.

We did accordingly catch it, and with a vengeance; for suddenly the sky was overcast with thick portentous clouds. The wind blew in fierce and hollow gusts, that sent us spinning through the water, gunwale under; while the tops of incipient billows began to curl aloft on the bosom

of the lake, lately as calm and tranquil as a treacherous smile on the features of my friend Slimley.

"'Tis the break-up of the monsoon, sure enough," said Croker, whose features assumed a livid paleness, as a tremendous flash of lightning burst from an angry cloud overhead; while heaven's dread artillery poured forth a continuous series of frightful explosions, that seemed to shake the earth to its very centre.

"Run up, Mustapha," I shouted, as I held a firm grasp of the tiller, "and clear that topsail halyard; for we must strike our sky-scrapers, or we shall soon go to Davy Jones's locker."

The boy bounded up with alacrity, clinging like a mountain cat to our simple rigging; and he was speedily seated astride on the cross-trees, taking in the top-sail.

"I wonder," said Croker, "if the lake is deep, hereabouts, for by Jupiter, I can't swim a stroke; but as I'm a tall fellow, I may have some chance of keeping my chin above water, if I can only touch the bottom with my toes."

He had scarcely uttered the words, when a hurricane blast struck us with such fury, that we upset in an instant; and all were engulfed in the boiling flood, which now raged with unmitigated

strife, as if lashed into endless commotion by all the winds of heaven.

But I speedily regained the surface, and eagerly grappled with the first object that met my hand. This was a conglomeration of mast, booms, and sails, which had fortunately been blown all together right out of the boat, and floated buoyantly upon the billowy surface of the lake. The mast had fallen across the booms; and all three being connected together by the sails and rigging, a species of raft was thus formed, which now alone stood between us and destruction.

To my delight, as I grappled one end of the mast, I saw Croker holding on firmly at the other. Our boat was gone to the bottom, where I took it for granted that poor Mustapha was also lodged; as my repeated calls on his name met with no other response, than the steady and tremendous howling of the wind. The dogs were all scattered about, swimming for bare life, and yelping piteously. I gave two or three of them shelter on our raft; but the remainder soon after disappeared in the deepening gloom, and thundering noise of the tempest.

It was pitch dark; but a lurid gleam occasionally swept over the waste of waters, imparting to every object a sickly and mysterious

tinge; while, as I looked on my fellow sufferer, now within a few yards of me, methought the hue of death was already impressed upon his features.

"Hollo! Croker," I exclaimed, in a cheerful voice, "how goes it old fellow?"

"By Jupiter, Percy," he replied, "that was a blast! I wonder if we shall ever get out of this infernal mess."

"To be sure we shall," I said. "Some boat or other will pick us up, when the first fury of the gale is past."

"But when will that be?" demanded Croker. "You don't know these storms as well as I do, Percy. They sometimes last for three or four days; sometimes for a whole week, as bad, aye and worse than the present; so that no boat will venture to cross the lake for some time to come."

"That's a bad look out," I returned; "but let us hope for the best, and never say die till we're kilt."

"Whatever you do," said Croker, "don't let go your hold on that end of the mast; for if you do, I must sink."

"Fear not, old fellow," I said; "though I know I could easily swim to shore, I'll never do so at your expense."

It was, indeed, a very frail and uncertain bulwark that now stood between us and our fate; for the mast lay across the booms in so slippery a manner, that the slightest extra motion at either end, to which Croker and I clung with tenacious death-grasp, would destroy the balance on which our lives depended. Self-preservation, therefore, kept us very quiet and watchful of our equilibrium; and I had frequently even to scold the poor dogs, for endangering it; when, in their solicitude, they would creep from the centre of the raft, and lick our hands in token of affection.

Meanwhile, the tempest was raging with ungovernable fury. It seemed like the "crack of doom;" and I almost expected that every instant the solid globe, unable to sustain the battling of the elements, would split into millions of fragments, and all fly off into interminable space. The lightning flashed incessantly, rending the massy curtains of the clouds with streaks of unimaginable brilliancy; while the awful peals of thunder, reverberating through the hollow concave, startled the very soul with their unspeakable grandeur.

Anon, the flood-gates of heaven were let loose, and the rain descended, not in torrents, but in water-spouts; masses of the angry fluid, beating

us down with irresistible fury; as if determined to dispute the honor of drowning us, with the world of waters in which we were already engulphed, and struggling for existence. It was awful to witness the contest that seemed to rage between two such dissimilar bodies of the same element: the rain one moment beating down the waves into something like a sullen calm, and the next, the waves dashing upwards their saucy heads, as if in bold defiance; while, ever and anon, a furious blast would come skirling along, and scatter the impotent combatants in showers of vapoury mist along the agitated surface.

"By Jupiter! this is a regular Forlorn Hope," sighed poor Croker. "I have never led one myself, but you have, Percy, and can tell us if there be any difference."

"So much," I replied, "that I would rather lead fifty than endure this agonizing life in death for another day. In a storming party, Croker, you have the certainty of speedy conquest, or sudden death: the hope of glory, the excitement, the emulation, the actual frenzy of the fight; with the shouts of admiration that urge you on, and crown you on the summit of victory. But this is dying like a dog; suffering whole hours and days under the infliction of every physical evil,

while the mind itself is chilled, cowed, and beaten down with despair."

"That's it," returned Croker; "I've stood face to face, both barrels empty, with a tiger in the jungle; and I never had the feeling of dread that is now coming over me."

I endeavoured to laugh Croker out of his panic; and, strange to say, there was a momentary lull in the tempest, as if the very elements were startled at the ghastly merriment of a perishing wretch like me. But it soon came on again, with tenfold fury: the constant howling of the wind surpassing everything of which we have any knowledge or conception, except it be the continuous roaring of ten thousand lions; and though, occasionally, a pale glimmer would steal over the leaden hue of the heavens, a feeble indication of the still existing sun, it would speedily disappear, and all again resume the sable tint of death. Our long immersion in the water had benumbed our limbs, the extremities of which were seized with frequent cramps; our half-naked bodies were shivering with cold; our entrails torn with the pangs of hunger; and our throats parched with a raging thirst (Pulicat being a salt-water lake), which it was useless to endeavour to assuage, by holding our mouths open to receive the rain-drops,

as they fell thick and heavy upon us and around us.

But vain are the efforts of language to describe the breaking up of the Indian monsoon, a periodical phenomenon that must be seen and felt to be thoroughly understood. With a mortifying consciousness of my own feeble powers, I retire from the hopeless task, and beg the reader to imagine that for two whole days and nights we were thus exposed to the unmitigated fury of the tempest; drenched, cold, shivering, hungry, and hopeless. During that period not a sail had appeared in sight; and nothing had responded to our frequent cries and shouts, but the wild shrieking of a sea-gull equally helpless as ourselves.

The morning of the third day, which rose gloomy and tempestuous like the preceding, found us dreadfully stiff, benumbed and exhausted; especially poor Croker, whose strength had been much reduced by a long attack of jungle fever. He frequently slipped from his hold, which with difficulty he recovered again, and was evidently becoming weaker at every effort. At last, he said, in a tremulous voice: —

"By Jupiter! Percy, there's no use in it. I'm as weak as water, and my hands have lost their grip entirely. You must cut and run, Percy.

Swim for your life, my boy, and leave me to my fate.

"No," I said, "Croker, I'll never desert you while there's a spark of life in your body. Besides, to tell God's truth, I don't think I have strength enough left to swim ashore now."

"Percy," said my poor friend, as he turned his now feeble gaze upon me. "You're a great book fellow, Percy, and have read a thousand things that I never even dreamt of. What do you think the next world is like?"

"Who can tell?" I replied, "nobody has ever returned to describe it; and we have really nothing to depend upon, on that point at least, but imaginary pictures drawn by poets, philosophers, and religious enthusiasts."

"Oh, murder!" exclaimed Croker, "is that all? Then it's a blue look out, Percy."

"But, instead of a fanciful description of the other world," I said, "we have the consolations of religion, the promise of salvation, and the innate and unquenchable conviction of the justice and mercy of the Creator, who will reward or punish us according to our works."

"Aye," said Croker, "that's my hope after all: for I have done as much good and as little harm as I could in this world, unless shooting tigers and

wild boars be a crime; and I always observed the Ten Commandments. I never drew a graven image in my life, Percy; and I never could make even pot-hooks and hangers like anything in this world, or the world above. I never committed a robbery or a murder, Percy, except stealing apples at school, and shooting Pindarries in the way of business. I never bore false witness on a court-martial; or otherwise and never coveted any man's wife but Old Nick's, and he was no neighbour of mine. I honour my father and my mother, Percy, and have sent them several tiger-skins; besides China crape shawls and strings of cornelians to my sisters. I never coveted any one's goods, except once an American rifle—such a beauty, Percy; stock and barrel all the same piece of iron, but still only feather-weight, it was so nicely balanced. Adultery, I believe, means manslaughter, or bigamy, and I don't rightly understand which; but thank goodness, I never committed either of them to my knowledge. As for keeping holy the Sabbath," said the poor penitent, "I'm afraid I must plead guilty, and throw myself on the mercy of the court; but not to the full extent of the crime charged: for I never had sons and daughters to break the sabbath, unless you count three or four little whitey-brown

pagans, that havn't a soul to be saved amongst the whole lot. As for men-servants and maid-servants, there are no such things in India, Percy, they're all boys and finished women in this country; and I'll engage that my Irish mastiff, Morgan Rattler, would soon settle the hash of any stranger that ventured within my gates: that means, I suppose, the milk-hedge of my compound, which had a great many gates, as you well know, Percy. In everything else, Percy, I've done my duty like a man, and all the rest is balder-dash—"

With this favourite and comprehensive term on his lips, poor Croker let go his hold, and went guggling to the bottom.

Soon after the final disappearance of my lamented friend, I made an attempt to swim ashore; but I found it vain to struggle with the tempest, in the exhausted state of my physical powers. I, therefore, returned to the mast, booms, and sails, which were now lumped together in a way that offered something in the shape of a resting place. Having succeeded to the sole inheritance of this last asylum, I threw myself down upon it, with my body half immersed in water; while my spaniel, Dash, the only dog now left, crouched down by my side, occasionally licking my hands and face, and looking

dolefully upwards, as the tempest beat against his shivering sides.

In this helpless position, recommending my soul to the mercy of its divine author, I patiently awaited the stroke of death. It came, at length, as I imagined; for a period of tranquillity succeeded the hungry gnawing which had so long disturbed me, and closing my eyes, I slept, as I supposed, to awake in eternity.

CHAPTER XXI.

A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN.

But I was mistaken: the end was not yet, and further scenes and trials lay before me.

I must have been insensible for several hours; and when at length I came to my recollection, and contrasted the scene of complicated horrors I had last witnessed, with the perfectly tranquil state in which I now was, I could only come to one conclusion—that my spirit had winged its flight from the troubled scenes of earthly existence, and was now at last in the regions of the blest.

Oh! what rapture filled my bosom at the thought of my beatitude! What unspeakable ecstacy thrilled through my veins, and vibrated in my heart of hearts; to find that I was at length released from the heavy load of earthly corruption, and that yet my spirit was free from those unendurable and never-ending pangs, to which poor

humanity is doomed for the few fleeting, transitory, momentary frailties of its mortal state! What delight to be within the very precincts of heaven—in the awful presence, perhaps, of the Deity himself! To be summoned to add my feeble voice to the universal hymn of praise, resounding eternally from the angelic choir! To be called upon in my turn, (for the mortal soldier still prevailed in my breast) to join the heavenly host of guardian seraphim; who, night and day, or rather throughout the one glorious and eternal sunshine, keep watch and ward around the throne of ineffable brightness, before which even the angelic gaze falls abashed, in awe and wonder!

And then, again, what bliss did I not anticipate from beholding once more amidst the heavenly host, purified from every mortal stain, those dear beings with whom my affections had been closely linked in a prior state of existence! To blend my spirit with theirs in that seraphic communion, the unspeakable reward of the good and just! To fly with them over illimitable space, in speechless admiration of the power of God, evinced in the countless worlds of his boundless creation; and to watch and guard, if so permitted, the erring footsteps of those dear beings who still lingered upon earth! Nor with less joy did I look forward to a

mutual recognition, and a happy meeting with those poets, sages, legislators, patriots, and warriors of antiquity, who might be deemed worthy of admission into paradise, without reference to age or clime: those "Christians before Christianity," in short; who, like Socrates, had given, in the purity of their lives, and the unerring wisdom of their precepts, certain indications of the divine spirit that inspired them. To mingle on an equal footing with these immortal luminaries, and to listen to their seraphic discourse, filled my bosom with anticipations of unsupportable joy; till, overwhelmed, as it were, by the bright ecstatic vision, my senses wandered, and I slept again.

From this ethereal doze—and I now found that even the angels sleep—I was soon after awakened by a delightful strain of simple melody that pervaded the place in which I lay; so soft, so delicate, so pathetic, that my soul was touched, tears gushed from my eyes, and I mentally ejaculated, "This sure, is heaven! Nothing earthly can resemble this!"

And yet, every object around me bore so close a resemblance to things familiar to me in the other world, that I was quite amazed at the trifling change which had occurred in the transition. I was lying in a delightful soft bed, the sheets and

curtains of which were white as the driven snow; while the sun was shining brightly through an open casement, and fell upon chairs, tables, and other well-known objects, of highly-polished teak and blackwood. A mahogany embroidery-frame stood by the casement, and near it sat an Angel.

An Angel! Yes, there could be no question about that, at least: she was so young, so lovely, so perfect in form and feature, and so redolent of ethereal bliss, that my doubts, if any I had, all vanished, and I listened, with intense delight, to the sweetly-plaintive notes she was drawing from a tiny flageolet, or sereneta,—the music which had first struck my ravished ears, when I awoke from all the gross delusions of my earthly nature, in a world of pure celestial spirits.

I spoke not, I moved not, I scarcely breathed, lest my guardian angel, as I took the form to be, should vanish into air, and leave me once more alone and desolate. But a few minutes only had elapsed, when the Spirit moving its head, our eyes encountered; with a sudden spring, half joyful, half terrified, she threw away the flageolet, clapped her hands, and ran out of the apartment, uttering something or other which I could not comprehend, in Dutch.

Yes, Dutch it certainly was—Low Dutch! In

that, at least, I could not be mistaken; and exceedingly mortified I felt, on finding so vile a language spoken in heaven. A terrible suspicion, however, crossed my mind; and I asked myself: "Can it be possible that I am still upon earth, in that horrid land of frogs, and vrows, and agues?" But in my fancied wisdom, I exclaimed: "There is an infallible test,—the teeth! the teeth!"

The Vision had now returned; and, approaching my bedside with noiseless footsteps, I immediately exclaimed, in French:—

"Sweet Angel! let me look at your teeth!"

"Voilà!" she replied, in the same language. "Behold!" and drawing back her lips, she displayed two perfect rows of the purest and most pearly texture.

"That settles the point," I said to myself. "No earthly Dutchwoman ever had such a mouthful of ivory as that. An Angel, of course, she must be; purified from all the dross of her earthly nature."

At that moment, another spirit, of matronly appearance, bearing a singular likeness to the first, entered the apartment; and approaching the bed, the younger one said in French,—"His mind still wanders, mamma: the first words he uttered were that I should show him my teeth."

The matronly Angel smiled benignantly; then retiring for a moment, she returned with a salver in her hand, on which stood a china basin that emitted a savoury odour, while a light curling vapour ascended from its brim.

Taking a spoon, that looked like earthly silver, she fed me from the contents of the basin; which seemed to me so like delicious soup, that I said to myself, as if thinking aloud, "'Tis strange that everything should be so like the world I have left; and still more singular that I should retain my earthly appetite to a degree which this ambrosia cannot satisfy."

A smile of intelligence passed between the two Spirits; the younger one glided from the apartment, and soon returned with another salver, bearing a china plate with a leg and wing of a chicken, to all appearance; and a wine-glass of amber-coloured fluid, which on tasting I found to resemble Madeira. These good things having despatched, I felt satisfied, consoled, as it were, in the regions of the stomach; and silent smiles of mutual gratification were exchanged between me and my celestial attendants.

My mind, as I thought, was perfectly collected at the time; and yet I could not recollect that I had ever heard enumerated amongst the enjoy-

ments of heaven, and the beatitudes of the blest, the luxury of lying in bed all day, and being fed by ministering angels with ambrosia resembling *soupe à la Julienne.* But I argued the matter in this way: I was either dead or alive, that was certain: if dead, how could I possibly be subject to the gross appetites of material existence? And if alive, how could I be ministered unto by angels, as they evidently were? My mind was sadly perplexed by the gravity of this dilemma; between the horns of which, laying my head back upon my pillow, my eyes closed, my thoughts became confused, a deep slumber usurped all my faculties.

On awaking, I again heard the music of the evening before. My guardian angel was at her post; but her strain was now more cheerful and more elaborate, displaying a perfection of skill that brought out the whole powers of the instrument; while, as the divisions followed each other in a rapid series of *ad libitum* passages, the whole were embellished with trills, graces, and appogiaturas, that made me fancy I was listening to a concert of the most delightful singing-birds that ever were created in earth or heaven.

It seemed to be morning, for the light was chaste and silvery; the air was fresh, and the perfume of a thousand flowers pervaded the apart-

ment. I felt wonderfully renovated by the balmy breath of early day, and entirely free from that sultry oppressiveness that was wont to weigh down my spirits when clogged with all my fleshy incumbrances. My mind was in a delirium of joy; and, though I felt excessively weak in my bodily functions, yet I knew that, being just born into a new state of existence, I could as yet be nothing more than a little child, for "of such is the kingdom of Heaven!"

At the conclusion of these reveries, my eyes met those of my guardian angel, radiant with joy, and happiness, and love.

As usual, when the bright spirit saw that I was awake, she vanished from the apartment; but soon returned with her elderly companion, both laden with the morning refection; which bore so strong a resemblance to an earthly breakfast that, after I had partaken of it very heartily, I began to suspect that my vision was not of so celestial a nature as I at first supposed. My thoughts, however, still wandered, my mental and physical powers being those of an infant; my body was exceedingly weak, my head confused, and I sank again into a long and refreshing slumber.

But, not to tire the patience of the reader, it will suffice to say, that three days more of this

kind, judicious treatment effectually brought me to my senses; the scales fell from my eyes, and I saw everything in its real state: a discovery which, at first, gave me infinite pain and vexation, though the continued presence of my angelic mortal attendants soon reconciled me to the change.

From them I learned that I owed my preservation to Mynheer Van Hogendorp, a Dutch gentleman of Pulicat, in whose house I now lay. After the fury of the tempest had abated, he was fortunately returning in a market boat from a village on the opposite shores of the lake, when he discovered me lying upon the raft which Providence had so kindly formed for my preservation. A dog was found lying across my apparently dead body, as if to keep it warm; and being in the last stage of existence, with a faint yelp he yielded up his life and charge together. Finding that the vital spark was not yet extinct, Van Hogendorp had the charity to bring me to his house; where, confiding me to the care of his wife and daughter, to their gentle and skilful attentions I owe my almost miraculous rescue from the tomb.

In a few days more, Elise, for so my Guardian Angel was called, and Madame Hogendorp, her mother, a lady of French extraction from Pondicherry, finding that I was now so much better,

were less frequent in their visits to my bed-side. The further progress of my cure was confided to two careful and attentive domestics, under whose skilful management I was soon enabled to leave my bed, and walk about a little; being treated, every now and then, with a glimpse of Elise, as she looked in smilingly, to see how I was getting on.

But I pined for that glorious apparition which had first struck my sight, on awaking from my trance; and I soon left my apartment, to mingle with the family, partaking of their meals with all the easy familiarity of a son and a brother; thus, in the delicious cool of the evening, seated in the garden, between the mother and daughter, Mynheer smoking his meershaum at a little distance, I enjoyed the melody of Elise's flageolet, and the simple but edifying conversation of her parents.

With pain, however, I saw that my worthy Dutch preserver was rather straitened in his circumstances; for he had little or nothing to support his family, but the pension allowed by the Company to all the surviving descendants of those early settlers who founded this once flourishing colony. I, therefore, proposed to Mynheer Van Hogendorp, that he should receive me as a boarder in his house, and accept of the first month's

stipend in advance, which latter stipulation he only agreed to, after much solicitation on my part.

Having procured a messenger for Bentinck Bungalow, I ordered my dubash to come over to Pulicat with all the luggage, as speedily as possible; and he soon after arrived, with a boat-load, which made the simple inhabitants of this decayed settlement look upon me as a person of some consequence. Mooto Kistna, I thought, would have gone out of his wits with joy, when he saw me thus like one restored from the dead; but he did not evince much sorrow for the loss of Croker: this was not for want of proper feeling, of which he had a reasonable share; but the Hindoos do not grieve as we do for the dead; whom they rather look upon as fortunate in being provided for, and freed from the cares and anxieties of this difficult world. The custom of cremation, also, by removing from their eyes all visible mementos of departed relatives and friends, materially tends to this apparent want of sensibility.

Mooto Kistna brought me a packet of letters from friends in various parts of India; including one which had arrived the day before, from Colonel Gordon, Brigade Major of King's troops, with whom, as a matter of course, I had left my address, on coming to Pulicat. This snuffy old

functionary informed me, in his cold, hard, official style, that the China ships were now in the offing, and that I must be prepared to embark, the very moment I received the order to do so.

This was the first startling summons to dissipate the dream in which I was indulging; and it brought me to book, rather abruptly, as to my future plans and prospects: but, wearied and worried with the speculation, I crushed the unwelcome missive in my fingers, threw it into a corner, and hurried off, to keep an appointment with Elise.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MAID OF THE LAKE.

It was that delightful interval between noon and night, which succeeds the fervours of the Indian day; when labour, "with its weary task foredone," hies home to its humble cot and welcome repose; when the evening breeze rustles among the broad-leaved plantain, wafting the perfume of the night flowers upon the sluggish air; and the glimmering fire-fly begins to show his tiny lamp amidst the deep shadow of the mango, flitting and sparkling through its mountain of dense foliage. It was at this sweet hour, which the Indian sojourner alone can appreciate, that Elise and I strolled out to enjoy the fresco; accompanied by her ayah, and a little playful spaniel, that skipped and bounded before her; and ever and anon returned, wagging his tail, and looking up into her beautiful features with his intelligent eyes, as if admiring her loveliness, or

seeking at her hand the reward of his humble but zealous services.

Nothing could be more in unison with the peaceful serenity of the hour, than the singular dreamy aspect of this ancient settlement. The town of Pulicat had once been extensive and populous; lying along the southern shores of the lake, and surrounded on three sides by a belt of mazy jungle, which was fast disappearing before the progress of arts, commerce, and manufactures, those deadly enemies of pastoral life and sylvan solitudes. But the superior energy and enterprise of the English laid the foundation of Dutch ruin, both at home and abroad: the reverses of the mother country were speedily felt at Pulicat; its commerce and manufactures declined, its wealth decayed, and its inhabitants fled in numbers to scenes of greater promise; while those who preferred remaining by the tombs of their ancestors, dwindled perceptibly into scarcely animate memorials of the past.

The jungle, also, as if conscious of its enemies' decay, had long been asserting its ancient rights, and was now, in its turn, taking possession of the empty tenements of the foe; a fine young cocoanut tree pushing its proud head through a tiled roof in one place, and the broad-leaved peepul

forcing its way through a solid wall in another; while lizards, snakes, scorpions, centipedes, and jackalls crawled or ran about, and peeped through the windows, in mockery, as it were, of the short-lived vanities of the human race.

The mango, the tamarind, the bamboo, the aloe, the cactus, and a thousand other trees, shrubs, and inferior vegetables springing thus spontaneously, in all directions, from the fruitful soil; usurped not only the silent mansions of the departed, but intruded even through every chink and crevice of the still occupied houses, as if impatient of the lingering presence of their lethargic inhabitants. There was thus an intermingling of animal and vegetable life and death that was affecting in a high degree; seeming to indicate the approaching end of all; when the last man, gazing around upon the growing wilderness, finally sinks, helpless and almost hopeless into the bosom of his parent earth.

But it was not alone in the jungle that the rapid vegetation of the East evinced itself: the very streets of Pulicat were overgrown with thick grass; through which a few straggling pathways seemed to maintain their positions with difficulty against the herbal encroachments which threatened before long to extinguish them altogether. The few houses that were still occupied, were so completely

embowered in luxuriant vegetation, as to be nearly hidden from the gaze of the traveller; while their idle inhabitants lingered on upon the Company's allowance, sufficient for their simple wants, and precluding the necessity of personal exertion on their parts.

Thus secluded from the world, and having little or no communication with the busy haunts of man, Pulicat might well be called, in the figurative language of the East, the "city of the silent;" that portion of the melancholy precinct expressly so termed, exhibiting a degree of repose scarcely more solemn or affecting than the rest.

This ancient receptacle of the dead, which comprised many tombstones one hundred and sixty years old, was situated immediately on the shore of the lake, and overlooked its various windings and mazy woodlands to a vast extent. Here seated with Elise upon a soft, mossy mound of earth, which haply covered the bones of some inglorious Van Tromp, I listened delighted, like another Sterne, to this modern Maria, as on her pretty little pipe she warbled her native wood-notes wild; gazing in her eyes, and drinking deep draughts of love from a fount the most artless and innocent that ever inflamed the breast of man.

Elise was a child of nature, in the fullest

sense of the term. She had never been out of Pulicat, except on a short visit or two to Madras; and she knew no one but her parents, and some half dozen old residents, as simple and secluded as themselves. Of the great world beyond the belt of jungle that enfolded her in its sylvan embrace, she knew absolutely nothing, either from oral tradition, or literary communication; her acquaintance even with books being of the most limited nature. The wonder, therefore, and delight with which she listened to my various recitals and descriptions of scenes, events, and personages, of which, even in dreams, she had never conceived any idea, may well be imagined. She laughed, admired, wept, or frowned, as corresponding emotions were excited in her breast by the interest of the narrative which called them forth; and her eloquent eyes amply repaid me for the pleasure I imparted: while, on my side, the feeling I entertained of her helpless innocence, and confiding simplicity, hallowed in my breast the sentiment she inspired, and gave it all the enduring brightness of a pure and holy flame.

Thus, many days were passed in sweet, yet dangerous communication with the gentle unsophisticated being, whose tender cares had been mainly

instrumental in recalling me to life. In her dear society I had no other wants or wishes; while, on her part, my presence alone seemed to fill her cup of joy to the brim. This was natural: I was, as it were, a waif of humanity cast at her feet by the waters of that lake which bounded the horizon of her humble existence; and in me, her cares had introduced a new being upon the earth. For my part, *blasé* from a long intercourse with the great world, where I had run the gauntlet of the human affections, and found nothing but disappointment in the chase, I was like the thirsty traveller when he discovers the pearly fountain in the desert; or the needy one, when he finds the priceless gem. Of all our themes of conversation, war, and its attendant horrors, seemed to yield her the most unqualified amazement and disgust; for, accustomed all her life to nothing but an interchange of kind offices with her peaceful and humble friends and neighbours, she had not the remotest idea of the savage scenes which, to vary our discourse, I occasionally related to her. Like Desdemona,

> "She swore 'twas strange—'twas passing strange!
> 'Twas pitiful—'twas wondrous pitiful!"

Like the same unhappy lady, alas! she also

"Lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
And I lov'd her that she did pity them."

But the reader is not to imagine that we were entirely devoid of social intercourse even in this woodland solitude; so remote from the ordinary haunts and busy hum of men, that it might well be likened to one of those fabulous cities of Eastern romance, whose inhabitants have been laid asleep for centuries by the potent touch of the magician's wand.

Let me introduce him, therefore, to Mynheer Canterfischer, fiscal, or magistrate, of Pulicat, when time was; a venerable, free-hearted old fellow, with an amiable wife and daughter. The next in dignity was my worthy host, Mynheer Van Hogendorp; the last descendant of a highly-distinguished family in the mother-country, and a perfect gentleman in every respect. Then there were Monsieur and Madame Heri; the former captain of a privateer, who had realized a small income by his cruises in the Indian seas; his wife being the daughter of a former governor of Pulicat, long since gathered to his fathers. Mr. Leslie, the master-attendant, comes next: a broad-set, strong-built fellow, who had been boatswain of a man-of-war, and was now, in his old age, planted, with a small salary, at Pulicat; his especial duties being

to look through his telescope at the flag-staff, to see that no one purloined the Union Jack; and to register by guess the number of market-boats that passed daily on their way to Madras. We had also, two or three other Dutch families, of minor consequence; and Dr. McIntire, a broad Scotchman, who had medical charge of the settlement, and enjoyed a moderate salary for administering the contents of his medicine chest, gratis, to the inhabitants.

These worthy individuals constituted our society; and a subscription ball got up in honour of my arrival, under the direction of Mr. Leslie's son, who played the fiddle, and exercised the treble functions of orchestra, ballet-master, and master of the ceremonies, served to give an air of gaiety to Pulicat, to which it had long been a stranger.

Oh! had the gentle reader but witnessed our morning visits; our political, literary, and philosophical discussions; our evening parties of tea, long whist, and eau-sucré; our musical meetings, with instrumental performances by flute, violin, and flageolet, and vocal duets, trios, and Dutch choruses, where every one sang his own tune independent of his neighbour;—had he but shared in our quadrilles and country-dances; and

strolled with Elise and me amidst embowering shades, impervious to the noon-day sun; on grassy slopes where the simple Hindoo, with his unsophisticated loom, wove those gorgeous handkerchiefs which once were famed throughout Europe; and down by the pebbly beach of the lake, to witness the gambols of the jumping fish, or watch the placid flowing of the tide, rolling its tiny billows on the wrinkled shore; he would at once conclude that I was the happiest of human beings, and would pity me—ah! how he would pity me when this little gleam of sunshine had also vanished, and like the baseless fabric of a vision,

"Left not a wreck behind."

It is, I believe, the lot of our earthly pilgrimage never to feel such perfect enjoyment when pleasure is within our reach, as we suffer misery from its loss. The truth of this I was now soon to experience.

The Tappall came in one morning when I was sitting with some visitors in Madame Hogendorp's drawing-room, and my boding heart sank within me as an official letter was placed in my hand. With a look of prophetic sadness, I broke the seal, and found it was an order to proceed forth-

with on board the 'Streatham' Indiaman, one of the homeward bound China fleet, then lying in Madras Roads.

My agitation was too apparent to be overlooked, and I was forced to reveal its cause. A general outcry of sorrow arose at the announcement; poor Elise turned deadly pale, tears gushed from her eyes, and she was forced to retire. Her mother was scarcely in a better plight, for she knew how seriously her daughter's happiness was compromised: in short, all my friends bewailed my approaching loss as a universal calamity.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD SEA-DOG.

But my two most staunch supporters on this melancholy occasion were Leslie and McIntire. These two worthy fellows had been daily and constant visitors of mine ever since my convalescence; dropping in regularly at half-past twelve every day, when they were sure to find some creature-comfort in my private apartment, as cold ham, Bengal hump, tongue and capon, &c., with a couple of bottles of cognac; and never leaving me till five, the family dinner hour. Their conversation, it is true, was not very instructive, but it was always amusing; especially when they began to quarrel, which generally took place towards the conclusion of the second bottle.

In the present critical state of affairs these trusty friends were both loud and vehement in their reprobation of so harsh a mode of proceeding

against "a gentleman and an officer," as Leslie remarked while we adjourned to our ordinary place of consultation:

"A gentleman and an officer, sink my heart! do you see?" continued Leslie, sticking his fork into a beautiful Westphalia, and helping himself to a wedge of the same; "a gentleman and an officer, who has shed his blood for his country and crown, sink my heart! and skivered those Pindarries, and other black rascals, like so many sparrows."

"Hech, sirs!" sighed the Doctor, pouring out a tumbler of consolation from the brandy-bottle: "Hech, sirs! but 'tis unco fashious to be sae stric in a matter like the present, where the happiness or meesery of twa desarving eendividooals—"

"Blood and thunder!" cried Leslie, snatching the bottle from the Doctor, and taking what he called a thimble-full; viz., three parts of a tumbler, "neat as imported." "Blood and thunder, man! is that all you can say in your snivelling Scotch fashion; for one of the bravest young fellows in the service, and one of the loveliest angels, sink my heart! that ever swung in a sailor's hammock—"

"Hoot awa, mon!" cried the Doctor, interrupting

him. "Let me tell ye, Meester Leslie, that oor sneeveling Scotch fashion, as ye ca't, is not to be pit down by ony sic blustering bletherum-skite as ye are, mon—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Leslie, winking at me, as he tossed off another bumper. "Sink my heart! I knew I'd soon rouse his Scotch blood to boiling heat. Go it now, Doctor; I've got the steam up for you, sink my heart!"

"Weel, then," said the Doctor, wetting his whistle ere he spoke; "my opeenion is jest this—let oor friend Blake, first and foremost, try the effec of a mollifying epeestle to the Commander-in-Chief, praying for twa months' leave, on urgent preevate affairs; and that will jest gie us time to look aboot us a wee."

"Good, again!" sputtered Leslie, with his mouth full of capon. "Doctor, sink my heart! you're a long-headed fellow. Here's to you, my boy!"

And both clashed their full tumblers together, as if they would shiver them to atoms.

"But what if he refuses?" I asked.

"Aye, what if he refuses?" repeated Leslie; "sink my heart! that's the point."

"In sic a case as that," said the Doctor, draining off his tumbler, and smacking his lips under the

operation; "in sic a case as that, noo, could ye na get yerself arrested for a sma' debt, mon?"

"Bravo!" cried Leslie.

"An jest gang into quod," continued the Doctor, "for a day or twa, till we can bail ye oot, mon."

"Bravissimo!" roared Leslie, finishing the first bottle. "Sink my heart! I'll be one of his bail. I'm a housekeeper and a burgess of Pulicat; and I pay scot and lot, and parish taxes, to the amount of sixpence halfpenny per annum."

"An by that time, ye ken," continued the Doctor, as he uncorked the second bottle, "the ships will have sailed awa, and ye'll be safe for a bonny twa months, at least, mon."

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Leslie, "Give us your fist, my hearty old cock. Sink my heart! but you're a brick, and no mistake."

Here they grasped each other by the hand, with a vehemence that shook the whole building. But I damped their zeal, by decidedly objecting to the Doctor's expedient.

"I owe nothing in the world," I said; "and getting up a sham debt for such a purpose might be thrown in my teeth, as unofficerlike."

"Sink my heart!" cried Leslie, "that's well thought on. I'm an officer myself—that is, a

warrant-officer—sink my heart! and I have a proper feeling for the honor of the service."

"Weel then," said the doctor, "if that cock winna fight, and we canna hit upon ony ither expedient, I suld na mind gieing ye a sick certeeficate, mon."

"Bravo! again," cried Leslie, with a choking gulp of brandy and water—"Sink my heart! the water is always bad in this house;—it weakens every think it touches—hand me the bottle, McIntire."

"Ye dinna look sae weel," continued the doctor, first helping himself, "but that ane may stretch a point in ye'r favour."

"To be sure, he doesn't," chimed in Leslie. "He's very red in the face, and sink my heart, but I think he's dropsical!"

"Nae, nae," said McIntire, "ye're oot there, mon: but there's a white and a yalla aboot his een, as ae body may ken, that spiers intul 'em; which eendicate a vara beelious state of the seestem."

"That's it, by the Lord!" cried Leslie. "Blood and thunder! didn't I tell you so?"

"Hoot! toot!" replied McIntire; "ye said dropesecal, mon."

"Well, isn't it all the same?" shouted Leslie, who had now made a deep inroad into the second

bottle. "Bilious and dropsical—sink my heart!—don't they both rise from the what do you call 'em state of the system?"

"Hoot awa, mon, nae sic a thing;" returned McIntire, still further diminishing the contents of No. 2. "They rise from different causes a' the-gither. Let me explain to ye, Meester Leslie ——"

"I want no explanations, sink my heart!" cried Leslie, who was now getting pugnacious. "Explanations are always the last shift of a fellow that won't fight, sink my heart!"

"An he that winna hearken tul explanations," retorted the doctor, "is leetle better nor ane o' the brute creation."

"What's that you say?" cried Leslie, seizing the bottle, as if about to fling it at his adversary's head; but, pouring its last contents into his tumbler, he drank it off, exclaiming:

"Here's confusion to you, sink my heart! for a Scotch quack!"

"And to yersel," retorted the doctor, snatching back the bottle, and taking a last drain, "for an eegnorant sea-going monster!"

Both worthies now staggered out of the room, and out of the house, in a paroxysm of mutual wrath and hostility; but, finding they could neither of them walk home singly, they locked

arms, and toddled off together to their respective quarters.

Little as I hoped for from the doctor's plan, still I followed it, when I looked at the tearful eyes and changing hue of poor Elise's delicate complexion; and applied for two months' leave, on most urgent private business: but my application was rejected point-blank. I then, as a *dernier resort*, sent in McIntire's sick-certificate; and for a couple of days had no answer, from which I began to hope it was taking effect.

On the third morning, I was practising with the *mukdurs*, the steel bow, and other oriental gymnastics, on the green before our door, with young Leslie, and two or three of my Dutch friends; when McIntire approached, arm-in-arm with a stranger, whom he introduced as his excellent friend Dr. McNab.

This was a pleasant, smiling, soft-looking person; who, addressing himself to me, spoke of the invigorating nature of my exercise, and asked a number of questions about the effects it produced on my health, strength, and appetite.

"Nothing could possibly be better," I replied. "The Oriental gymnastics are the best ever invented for improving and preserving all the physical functions."

"And to judge from your appearance, Sir," said he, "I should take the air of Pulicat to be particularly salubrious."

"It agrees remarkably well with me," I replied; "for I never was better in all my life."

The stranger now took a polite and friendly leave, and walked off with his friend McIntire. The latter, poor fellow, whether suffering from bowel-complaint, or an overdose of brandy, had greatly amused me by making the most horrible wry faces during our short colloquy; in which, however, he did not utter a word.

Half-an-hour afterwards, he burst into Madame Hogendorp's drawing-room, foaming with rage, and exclaiming,—

"Deel tak it a' Sir! Ye hae ruined me and yersel too, by yer seelly conduc."

"Hollo, Doctor!" I replied, "what's the matter, man?"

"Matter enoo to mak a mon ban his ain faither and mither," cried the Doctor, stamping about the room.

"But explain, my dear Sir," I said. "I can listen to explanations better than Leslie."

"Did ye na see me makkin faces at ye a' the time?" demanded poor McIntire.

"Certainly," I replied; "horrible faces."

"An could ye na guess what it was aboot mon?" he continued.

"Well," I replied, "I at first thought you had been taking an overdose of your own physic; and then it occurred to me that it might be spasmodic cholera."

"Spasmodic deevil, Sir!" cried the Doctor, foaming at the mouth. "'Twas the Physician-General to the Forces, Sir!"

"The Physician-General!" I exclaimed. "What! your excellent friend, Dr. McNab!"

"To the deevil I pitch sic freendship, Sir!" cried McIntire. "He has suspended me for signing yon sick-certeeficate, like a gowk an a fule as I was."

"My dear Doctor," I said, "I am truly sorry to hear it."

"Ye'll be unco mair for yersel, I'm thinking," returned the Doctor, who was not to be conciliated. "Ye'll be sent ower the surf * noo, Sir, wi a flea in yer lug; and sae gude bye to ye, Sir."

"But stay, my dear fellow," I said, "and take a drop of brandy before you go."

"Brandy be d——; nae, nae, I dinna mean that exactly," said the poor Doctor. "Gie's the bottle,

* The familiar term at Madras for deportation from India.

mon; but, in fac, I'm in sic a swither, that deil tak my saul gif I ken ony mair either what I'm sayin or doin. Here's wussin ye a pleasant voyage, mon," he continued, as I poured him out a tumbler; "for e'en go ye must the noo, in spite of the deevil."

"I'll have a fight for it first," I exclaimed, as I looked at my poor, trembling Elise.

"Sink my heart! that's right my boy!" cried Leslie, bustling into the room, and seizing the bottle before it was quite empty. "That's right, my hero; I like your spirit; sink my heart!" here he smacked his lips, after a good swig of the same. "And may I be teetotally——hem—ahem. I beg pardon ladies; I didn't see you before. But curse me, I say, if I don't back your tack. Let 'em come on now. Sink my heart! I'm ready for a dozen of 'em!"

"Who do you mean?" I exclaimed.

"The police peons, to be sure," replied Leslie: "There's a posse of them coming up the street at the heels of the Inspector."

"Close the doors!" I shouted; "and keep the rascals out."

But the doors were already in possession of the civil force; and the Inspector, an old English sergeant, entered the drawing-room, followed by

a dozen of his peons, with tulwars stuck in their girdles; while the ladies all fled screaming, and even the Doctor slunk out, muttering to himself as he absconded :—

"Ma certie, this is unco shairp practice; but I ha nae peety for the puir seelly fule wha canna keep his ain coonsel."

Leslie, however, stood by me like a trump, and bared his huge wrists for the onslaught.

"What is the meaning of this infamous outrage?" I demanded of the Inspector.

"'Tis no outrage, Sir," replied the latter, in a firm but respectful tone. "We are come in the discharge of our duty, acting under the authority of government."

Here the Inspector handed me a copy of his warrant; authorising and directing him to seize the person of Lieutenant and Acting Captain Blake, wheresoever he might be found; and to convey him on board the 'Streatham' Indiaman, by main force, if necessary: in virtue of an Act of Parliament, which confers upon the Honourable East India Company, in full possession, the power of deportation; to enable them to remove from India, "individuals whose conduct, *or intentions*, they might find, *or suspect*, to be dangerous."

This precious document, founded upon an Act

which rivals anything that ever emanated from the Council of Ten, was signed Frederick Slimley, principal Secretary to government.

"What!" I exclaimed, "is that the late Resident at Ruttunpoor?"

"The same, Sir," replied the Inspector.

"Then, by heavens!" I cried, "I'll not budge a foot on the warrant of such a scoundrel. 'Tis a palpable conspiracy, and I claim the rights of a British subject."

"That's all very well in England, Sir," replied the Inspector, "but our laws are more summary on this side of the Line."

He then ordered two of the peons to lay hold of me: but these I knocked down, as I did three or four others in succession; till, at last, they overpowered me from behind, holding me firmly pinioned and unable to move hand or foot.

Meantime Leslie had also come to action, and knocked the police peons about like nine-pins. It was in vain that they rushed at him in threes or fours: all went down before his conquering fist, and nothing could withstand the tremendous cross-buttocks of the sturdy old tar.

Some of the peons at length drew their weapons, but the Inspector shouted amidst the fray:

"Tulwar ni! Langooty! Langooty!"

Thereupon a cunning old peon rapidly unfolded fifty yards of turban, the ample covering of his crafty skull; one end of which he held himself, giving the other to an equally experienced hand. These two fellows then commenced running round the gallant Leslie in opposite directions, winding about his sturdy legs such a Gordian knot as Alexander himself couldn't cut; till, at last, with a pull together, they brought my champion down upon his back! and he fell like a Martello tower, shaking the whole building to its foundation.

Being thus, like another Gulliver, at the mercy of his Lilliputian foes, the brave old tar was tied neck and heels, and left alone with his glory; while I was marched off to a boat, and conveyed to Madras, the agonizing screams of poor Elise still ringing in my ears.

At Madras my friends all came round me, and represented in its true light the utter madness of a struggle with the government, on a point wherein its right was as clear as the sun at noon-day. I reluctantly yielded at length to my fate, and gave my parole that I would go on board without further resistance, which I did, my luggage having been all shipped before me.

Ere I left Madras, however, I got my hoondie

cashed, and purchased a splendid cashmere shawl, for one thousand rupees; which, with a most affectionate letter, I despatched by a trusty messenger to my dearly beloved Elise. The following morning we sailed with the ebb-tide, and I bade adieu for ever to a country which had been so productive to me of good and evil.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TWO BRACELETS.

I SHALL not inflict upon my patient readers a narrative of my passage home; which comprised, however, many curious incidents of foreign adventure. Suffice it to say, that, after touching at Colombo, Cape-Town, St. Helena, where I had the gratification of seeing "the Great European Culprit;" and Ascension, where I assisted in the capture of some splendid turtle; I arrived, at length, in the Downs, after a passage of five months and six days. I landed immediately at Dover, and was speedily in the world's metropolis.

I must, also, leave to the reader's imagination, the delight I experienced at finding myself once more in this *ne plus ultra* of modern civilization, after so many years of half-savage life, in the Spanish bivouac, and the jungles of India; where

the refinements of society are so little attended to, and the humanizing intercourse with the better part of creation is of such rare occurrence, that the mind becomes cynical, and the manners coarse and awkward, under the privation. Like a captive just escaped from a dungeon, and mad to enjoy the liberty for which he has pined in vain, I eagerly sought those social enjoyments from which I had been so long debarred; and Fortune seemed to meet my wishes half way: for many of my old Militia and Peninsular friends, who had either attained high army rank, or were accustomed to move in the fashionable world, were glad to renew our former intimacy; and vied with each other in introducing me to their respective circles, wherein I was received as favourably as my most sanguine hopes could anticipate.

But, happily, I did not lose myself in the vortex of dissipation so entirely as to neglect my military prospects—still the ruling passion of my breast. Having frequently heard of the superior efficacy of a campaign at the Horse Guards, over those any where else, I resolved to try its virtues. I, accordingly, prepared a memorial, and attended the levees of the military secretary, Sir Herbert Taylor, the most amiable man in office I have ever encountered. Through his intervention with the

Commander-in-Chief, then the Duke of York, justly and significantly styled "the soldier's friend," I was soon gazetted to a company in the —th, wherein I subsequently met several of my old Peninsular companions.

Having wet my new commission in the most approved fashion, received the congratulations of numerous friends, and enjoyed, for a couple of months, sagely and judiciously, I trust, the "never-ending, still-beginning" pleasures of London, I resolved to pay a visit to my relatives in Ireland. I, accordingly, wrote to inform my brother and sister, that I was coming over to beat up their quarters, previously to joining my new regiment, which was then at the Cape.

Before I left London, however, I submitted my splendid bracelet to the inspecton of a lapidary, who valued it at six hundred pounds, and offered me that sum for the stones alone; but I refused to part with the jewel, being, I confess, somewhat vain of such a present from a sovereign princess, and the handsomest woman I had ever beheld. Nay, I could not help contrasting its brilliancy with the dulness of the little hair bracelet that still occupied its original position on my left wrist; smiling, at the same time, with great self-compla-

cency, and a species of contempt, at the humble offering of my little cousin.

But my heart smote me as I did so, and my eyes filled with tears as I thought of that morning when the dear little creature clung to me, sobbing her very soul out, as the only good she longed for on earth; binding me to her for ever, as it were, with all her worldly possessions, her little bracelet, woven by herself with her own rich auburn tresses. With a feeling of deep contrition, for the momentary baseness into which I had been betrayed, I replaced the splendid bauble on my wrist, exclaiming: "Lie thou there; a valued gift, it is true, from one who is the willing bride of another: but, nearer and dearer to my heart is this unpretending relic of true love, whose pure ethereal flame can never be rivalled by the cold glitter of the brightest diamond!"

"Poor Honoria!" I thus continued to soliloquize, "into which of the numberless paths of life has fortune directed your footsteps? Are you now the homespun wife of some sturdy farmer, surrounded by your children, your cattle, and your poultry; every thought directed to the due fulfilment of your rustic duties, and all ambition bounded by the periodical splendors of the

market-day? Or, are you the less fortunate spouse of some high-born spendthrift, some needy artist, or some wandering soldier, who can but ill-appreciate the sterling value of your heart? Wherever you are, and however employed, my poor little cousin, may your happiness equal the sum of your own merits, and of my wishes! Providence can do no more for you, in this world, at least."

Inwardly gratified by this apostrophe to the virtues of my dear little cousin, I now made preparations for my visit to the *natale solum;* but, strange to say, in spite of reason and reflection, I could still look upon her in no other light than as the little girl who fainted in my arms thirteen years before, on my quitting her for ever.

I cannot now recollect what it was that took me round by Bristol and Cork, in my journey to Ireland on the present occasion. Perhaps it was that, being so much accustomed to light infantry manœuvres, I was desirous of coming upon my friends by a flank movement, when they would naturally look for my front approach, *viâ* Dublin: perhaps it was the finger of Destiny, which governs and controls the course of human events; while man, "proud man," in his own conceit is a free

agent, forsooth, and unlimited master of his thoughts and actions!

But, leaving the solution of this knotty point to future metaphysicians and ideologists, to the "Beautiful City" I went, by the Bristol steamer; and thence to Michelstown by the mail. From the latter place, I took a post-chaise, to cross the Galtie mountains to Tipperary; a wild and dreary piece of road which I have seldom seen equalled, except, perhaps, in the Apennines between Florence and Bologna.

Every one recollects the old joke about Irish posting, in which Judy, the cook, is represented bringing out a red-hot poker to give the mare a burn before she'd start; and if I might form a judgment from the specimen of cattle I was favoured with, there was really very little exaggeration in the caricature. Such a ricketty fabric of a post-chaise, dangling at the heels of such a pair of raw-boned, broken-kneed hacks, had never come under my observation before: but it was Hobson's choice; and, as the postboy very pithily remarked, I must "either pad the hoof, or contint myself wid the handsome-iligant carriage that the Prince Raygent himself might be proud to ride in." We accordingly started on our ill-omened journey; and the

dislocation of bones I experienced for the first three miles, still occupies a very prominent, though not a very verdant spot in memory's waste.

We at length began to ascend the Galties, which brought a little relief, for this simple reason, that our progress being necessarily very slow, the jolting was not so incessant as before. But now a still more serious difficulty began to manifest itself; for the steep ascent was evidently knocking up my half-starved jades, and I began seriously to entertain the agreeable prospect of passing the night without food or shelter on this bleak and inhospitable mountain.

Still, however, we struggled onwards, every step diminishing my hopes of reaching the end of my journey: while, as if to increase my vexation, my rascal of a post-boy went on whistling and singing alternately: occasionally favouring me with a tune on the Jew's-harp, as if we were going on velvet; and every now and then addressing some sage remark, or droll saying, to the poor soul who sat cursing his stars in the corner of his shandradan.

"I'll engage, Sir," he would say, "this is the first time you have ever been on the sod, now, and I'm sure it is."

"Why do you think so?" I demanded.

"Becaise you don't take things aisy," he replied,

"and you don't seem to be used to our iligant roads; and shure the devil a betther can be found from this to themselves, any how."

"It is not so much of your roads I complain," I said, "as of your carriage and cattle."

"See that now," returned the driver with a grin. "Faith, I'll engage 'tis they were the smart nags whin the masther's father bought 'em, God be good to his soul! five and twenty years agone, come Michaelmas, as I have heard tell."

"The chaise is well matched with the horses," I observed, "for antiquity, at all events."

"Aunt who, Sir?" demanded the fellow with a leer, that left it doubtful whether his question arose from ignorance or insolence; "I don't think masther ever had an aunt of that name Sir, at all, at all. But as for the hack,* sure it belonged wanst to the Earl of Kingston; the ould, ould Earl, Sir, that shot Beau Fijarrald (Fitzgerald) for running away wid his daughter, an he a lying in bed at the time."

"Who was lying in bed?" I asked.

"Colonel Fijarrald, Sir," he replied. "An when the ould Earl kem into his bed room, wid a

* The post-chaise is generally so called in the south of Ireland.

small young gun in his fist, he says to him, says he:

"'You thief o' the world, you ran away wid my daughter,' says he.

"'No I didn't,' says Beau Fijarrald, as bould as a lion, 'twas she ran away wid me,'" says he.

"Wid that, yer honour, the ould Earl up wid his gun, and dhrove a brace of bullets into Beau Fijarrald; an its a box o'could meat he was in a brace o'shakes, yer honor."

Thus my driver ran on, either from natural garrulity, or a wish to divert my attention from the wretched condition of his cattle; sometimes whistling with that wild pathos peculiar to the Irish peasantry, and at others breathing forth a snatch of an old song teeming with drollery and fun. Nor was his patchwork conversation devoid of the serious and terrific; for ghosts, hobgoblins, highwaymen, flying witches, and creaking gibbets, formed the great staple of his reminiscences, especially as the night drawing on seemed naturally to suggest such grisly themes.

The sun was now sinking behind the lofty pinnacles of the mountains on our left, and the shadows of the rocks were projecting to an awful length; when a fairy-like strain of music floated on the air, so unlike anything earthly, that I stopped

the chaise to listen to the delicate and tiny melody.

"'Tis the good people, Sir," said the driver; "and it comes from the Danish mount beyond there, where they're houlding their junkets now, the Lord betune us and harm! myself often hears it when I comes up this road."

"Drive on," I said, "and you'll soon hear it louder."

"Sorrow a bit, Sir," said he, "'tis never louder than that yer honour."

He was mistaken, however; for at the next turn of the road the soft tones of the Irish pipes, which had hitherto been deadened by the intervention of some rocky eminences, swelled loudly on the breeze, intermingled with peals of laughter and shouts of merriment; and I hailed the ever-welcome sound as a happy omen.

After toiling up the mountain for another half hour, by an evidently expiring effort of our sorry hacks, we at length reached a spot where two roads crossed each other; and there we found forty or fifty young men and women from some neighbouring hamlets, it being Sunday evening, dancing joyously to the music of a blind piper, who effectually roused the mountain echoes with the energy of his performance.

Our panting horses were now completely knocked up, and decidedly refused to budge another inch; while the peasants crowded around us, some quizzing my equipage, and others commiserating my dilemma; but all concurring in opinion that the horses could go no farther, and that no others could be procured within a distance of at least twelve miles.

At length, while venting my spleen in a polyglot tirade of expletives, foreign and domestic, one young fellow cried out—

"Arrah, boys! let us dhraw the Captain and his carriage over the top of the mountain, and give his garrons a bit of a rest."

A dozen voices instantly responded in the affirmative to this generous proposal: the horses were unharnessed, and the boys buckled to the traces, while the girls laughed, and joined heartily in the frolic; by turns encouraging their swains, and quizzing those who stumbled, or seemed blown with the exercise. In this novel manner we, at length, reached the top of the mountain, three long miles, at least; and there the free-hearted fellows gave me a joyous cheer, and bade me God speed.

I insisted on their accepting something for their trouble; but this they decidedly refused.

"We know your honor's an officer," said their

spokesman, "by the cock of your eye; but even if you were only a gintleman, we'd do as much and more for you, wid all the veins of our hearts."

"Hollo! Hollo!" exclaimed a rough manly voice at this moment, "what is the matter here? I hope nobody's hurt."

"Plaize yer honor, Mr. Fijarrald," replied half-a-dozen of my new friends, as a stout, middle-aged gentleman, on a powerful horse, now came in sight at a turning of the road: "Plaise yer honor, 'tis only the captain's horses are knocked up, and regular garrons they are too, and we have been giving him a lift up the hill."

"Well done, boys, well done!" said the stranger, whose countenance, as he approached, beamed with the most perfect good nature. "But, perhaps," he continued, "perhaps, the poor gentleman wants something more than a lift. Let me see, let me see."

He alighted, and coming up, shook me heartily by the hand, exclaiming:

"I'm glad to see you, Sir, but sorry for your mishap. Them garrons of yours arn't worth their oats. Oh, it's you, Mr. Dan! I have warned you before against coming up these mountains with such cattle as them."

"Then, plaise yer honor," said the post-boy,

"its what my master has been going to the fair of Kilworth these three months past, to shoot himself with a couple of good nags; but as the captain was in a hurry to get to Tipperary——"

"To Tipperary!" interrupted the stranger; "he'll never get there with a pair of beasts that are only fit for the hounds: you and your master ought to be ashamed of yourselves; but stay, stay—let me see, let me see. I'll tell you, Sir, what you had better do. In the first place, you had better stop at my poor cabin to-night, any how, and to-morrow we'll see more clearly before us: perhaps, the beasts may recover strength enough to take you on; but if not, we'll find some other way, sure."

With many thanks and apologies, I accepted the kind offer of my new friend; who threw the bridle-rein over his arm, and we walked slowly down the hill together, towards the Glen of Aherlow; while he gave directions to our attendants, in the tone of a man accustomed to command.

"Now Dan," he said, "you move on with that old rattle-trap of yours to Glenville; and put it up in the coach-house till morning."

"Yis, yer honour," said Dan.

"Put your horses in the stable, Dan," he continued, "and give them a good feed of oats; I'm

thinking its some time since they've had a smell of that same."

"Thank yer honor," said Dan.

"Then Dan," continued the stranger, "take your own post by the kitchen-fire, and take a share of what's going."

"Long life to yer honor, and long may you reign!" cried Dan, as he whipped his horses into a trot down the hill; for they seemed to have some intuitive knowledge of the unwonted treat that was in store for them.

"And now, boys," resumed the stranger, "you follow Dan down to Glenville, and tell the mistress to give you all a drop o' the crather; and I'll engage she has some nice little cordial or other for the colleens, too, that have been helping you up the hill with that lumbering old chaise."

A cheer for Squire Fitzgerald now rang out boldly from the party of pedestrians; who set off in a race down the hill, laughing and frolicking with each other, as if they were the happiest of God's creatures.

Mr. Fitzgerald and I followed them slowly; chatting as we went along, on the weather, the abundant harvest, and such other topics as a country gentleman may be supposed to relish, till we had got nearly halfway down the mountain; then, di-

verging from the main road, we followed another for some time, as it led into a wooded dell, or narrow valley, between two lofty spurs of the Galties, which seemed planted there by nature to shelter the secluded and lovely spot from the northern blast. We at length arrived at a neat porter's lodge, and iron gate, which being opened for us, my new friend gave me a cordial welcome to Glenville.

"*Caid mil a faltha!*" said the worthy man, shaking me by the hand; "but that's Greek to you, anyhow, for I perceive by your accent that you are an Englishman. It means a hundred thousand welcomes; and, if I may judge by your manners and conversation, you are entitled to every one of them."

I was about to express my grateful acknowledgments for the compliment, when the party of rustics returned, laughing and singing, from the house; and, as they wished us good night, they gave one more hearty cheer for Squire Fitzgerald, and the Knight of Glynn.

"That's a great relation of mine, Sir," said my host, "who sometimes does me the honor of a visit, especially when he wants to canvass the county; but his sphere of life is too lofty for a plain gentleman-farmer like myself."

We were now surrounded by a dozen dogs, pointers, terriers, beagles; and one or two of those majestic stag hounds, the breed of which is not yet extinct in Ireland; who kept frolicking, jumping, and barking with joy all the way up the avenue, as if determined to show the stranger, that the "*caid mil a faltha!*" could be uttered by other tongues besides that of the master.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MOUNTAIN SYLPH.

THE autumn was pretty well advanced, and the breeze blew loud and shrill amongst the lofty trees that skirted the carriage way; while the frequent rustling of the leaves, as they fell to the ground, was significant of approaching winter, and the cawing of the rooks became fainter and fainter, as they settled themselves for the night in their lofty habitations. The avenue led us to a broad, level lawn, on one side of which stood the mansion of my friend; a plain, country residence, spacious, and, doubtless, comfortable, but without any pretensions to architectural beauty.

We were received at the front door by a couple of domestics; one of whom took Mr. Fitzgerald's horse, and the other lighted us into a venerable hall, hung round with fowling pieces, fishing rods, whips, hunting caps, great coats, antlers, and other indications of the chase and rural life. From the

hall, we proceeded at once into the drawing-room; where I was presented by my host as an English gentleman whose horses had knocked up on the road, and whom he had consequently entreated to take up his residence with them for the night, and as much longer as he might choose to honor them with his company.

"He is heartily welcome," said a comely matron, holding out her hand to me frankly and kindly: "but, good gracious, Edward, you can't imagine what a start I got when the chaise came up the avenue, surrounded by all the neighbours. My heart leaped to my mouth; for I thought you might be hurt inside, and the roads are not very safe of late at this hour of the evening."

"Tut, tut, old woman," said Fitzgerald, giving his wife a good hearty buss, "there's not a man in the barony would hurt a hair of Ned Fitzgerald's head. But where's the *colleen dhass?*"

"Here I am," replied a voice of silvery sweetness, whose tones thrilled to my heart with some secret and undefinable power. "Here I am, holding a learned discussion with this venerable ecclesiastic, on the authenticity of Ossian's poems."

I turned with surprise to where the voice proceeded from, and beheld a young lady, to whom my host introduced me as his sister-in-law: he also introduced me to Father Carrol, the venerable

ecclesiastic before mentioned; whose laughing eyes, and rubicund visage, displayed anything but symptoms of mortification and penance.

"Pray which side of this vexed question do you take, colleen machree?" demanded Fitzgerald.

"Oh, I am entirely for their authenticity," she replied.

"I am afraid," said the priest with a smile, "that the ladies all decide from their feelings in this case, rather than their judgment."

"And where," cried the lady with vivacity, "where can we find a better guide than the instinct, or feeling, call it which you will, that Heaven has implanted in our breasts, to direct us, with unerring aim, to a just conception of all that is noblest in our nature, and of language the fittest and most eloquent to give it expression? It is very well for the bookish pedant, whose heart is dry and withered as his musty old tomes; or for the cold sceptic, who ventures even to sneer at those manifestations of Divine power which we are taught to revere from our infancy; to rail at the so-called impostor, to whose elegant muse we owe this fascinating production. But if all others do not confess, by their humid eyes, and palpitating hearts, the touch of nature, the light of truth, and the power of eloquence, which sparkle and shine through every strain of Ossian; carrying the rapt

soul from the enjoyment of every luxury that modern art and science have ever invented, to revel on the bleak hills, the chilly mists, the rolling clouds, and the shadowy forms of Morven, then I willingly yield the palm to my reverend adversary; who, while he denies the authenticity of Ossian on that internal evidence which seldom deceives, exacts from us the most implicit belief in mysteries a thousand times more profound and inscrutable."

The reader may, perhaps, look upon this as a little flight *ad captandum*, a feminine ruse to attract the notice of the stranger; but I assure him that such was not the case. The spirited defence of Macpherson was uttered in such quiet and lady-like tones, and the speaker was, to all appearance, so unconscious of my presence, having as yet scarely so much as looked at me, that I could not regard it as any more than her natural and customary mode of expression.

This also seemed to be the general idea; for every one either assented to, or dissented from the remarks of the fair champion in the ordinary manner but myself. For my part, I stood open-mouthed, gazing upon her with an intensity that must have been construed into rudeness, or stupidity. I had often, amidst the conflict of opinions on this subject, endeavoured to analyse my own ideas of Ossian, yet never until now

could I find befitting words to express them; but I did not hesitate to adopt at once as my own the language of the fair girl, who now sat before me, altogether unconscious of the interest she was exciting in my breast. Whether it was from this coincidence of sentiment, or from the silvery tone of her voice, which still seemed to hover in the air, I stood gazing, stupidly enough I confess, as if waiting for the conclusion of some delightful strain of ethereal melody,

To relieve me from this awkward position, which was too apparent to all, Mrs. Fitzgerald observed to her husband:

"I have had the gentleman's luggage brought in here for the present, as he may probably have occasion for it."

"Aye, here it is," said mine host. "Three large portmanteaus, with the letters P. B. in brass. I hope they're all right, Sir; these are your initials, I presume."

"Yes, yes," I replied; "and they remind me that I ought to apologise for not acquainting you with my name before now. It is Blenkinsop—Peter Blenkinsop, at your service."

"A good old English name, Sir," said my host, presenting me over again to the company as Captain Peter Blenkinsop.

Now, why I gave this name instead of my own, I have no more distinct idea than the man in the moon. It could not have been with the view of imposing on, or even hoaxing my worthy host, who merited far different treatment at my hands; nor was it because I was ashamed of my own name in my own country, after having borne it so long in so many others: but, in fact, honest Ned Fitzgerald had set me down as an Englishman; and my own easy complying disposition induced me to fall in with his humour for the moment, rather than subject him to the mortification of retracting his first impression. It was, moreover, a matter of no consequence; for we were all utter strangers to each other, and would separate on the morrow without a chance of ever meeting again.

The family tea-table was now laid out, loaded through its whole extent with all appliances for a hearty meal, including ham, tongue, cold beef, cold fowl, &c., &c. We took our places in a merry circle, altogether free from the constraint of etiquette; our numbers being increased by the only son and two daughters of my host; quiet, nice-looking children, who now, for the first time, made their appearance.

Chance had placed me exactly opposite the

young lady whom my new friend had distinguished by the epithet of *Colleen-dhass*, which signifies, I believe, darling girl, or some other term of equal endearment; and mysteriously touched as I had been by her voice, I was now still more so by her features. These were not regularly beautiful, but they beamed with intelligence and good humour: in short, I could not keep my eyes off them, for they possessed that charm of graceful intellect and mental superiority which fascinate more deeply than the most decided beauty, or symmetry of form or outline. I could never have seen her before, that was clear; and yet there was something in her countenance that recalled a dim vision of the past: but whether it was a sleeping, or a waking dream, I could not for my life decide.

"Pshaw!" I mentally exclaimed, as I helped myself to a huge slice of cold roast beef, "it cannot be that I am going to take the distemper again, as that puppy Richardson used to say. It cannot be that a heart so often seared to the core with the flames of love, for some of the most beautiful women of the various countries it has been my lot to visit, should now once more be sensible to the attractions of an Irish country-girl. Impossible! why, as I hope for mercy, she has a

pug-nose; and though she does not squint, yet her eyes are full of fire, that indicates a little of the shrew. Then her brogue—nay, nay, let me do her justice, she has no brogue—not an atom; her accent is purer than my own. Why, on my life, she has been talking French and Italian with Father Carroll, with a facility and eloquence that I have never heard surpassed! Where the deuce could she have picked up such accomplishments amidst these woods, and wilds, and rocky mountains?"

A brilliant peal of laughter, full, rich, melodious, ringing from the cherry lips of the fair object before me, recalled me suddenly to the absurdity of my conduct; for, during this inaudible soliloquy of mine, instead of eating as a hungry man should have done, I was actually piling my plate with cold ham, roast fowl, beef, toast, bread-and-butter, slim cake, and seed cake, to a degree that set the whole table in a roar.

I apologized to the lady of the house for the strangely ridiculous part I had been playing, which I endeavoured to account for on the plea of being subject to fits of abstraction.

She received my excuse with the most perfect good humour, and hoped to see me make use of at least a good portion of what I had before me.

"Oh, as for that, ma'am," said the priest, "I'm thinking that Captain Blenkinsop would make a right good Catholic; for, while he was loading his plate with a week's provisions, he was practising a degree of abstinence that would do honor to a Carmelite friar."

"But abstinence, my dear Sir," said Fitzgerald, falling in with the priest's humour, "is not enough for a proselyte. In this matter-of-fact age we require more striking proofs: 'tis not the cowl, you know, that makes the monk."

"Then I hope, Sir," returned the clergyman, "that you will accept saint-worship as one of those proofs; for I can safely declare that all the time the captain was garnishing his plate, in his fit of abstraction, he never once took his eyes off the fair countenance of Miss Honoria Blake."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, with an involuntary start that upset my tea-cup, to the renewed amusement of the younger portion of the family, though the elders had tact enough to avoid all notice of my *gaucherie;* while the young lady herself, rising from the table, went to the piano, and ran her fingers over the keys, with a light, rapid, and graceful execution, that showed her mastery of the instrument.

The riddle was then read—the sympathetic cord

which had touched my heart was accounted for:—before me sat a grown-up, elegant, and highly-accomplished woman, the *protégé* of the benevolent Countess of Kingston, and the dear little child, who, thirteen years before, had wept herself into fits at my departure for the wars; after having placed upon my wrist, as a *gage-d'amour*, her little bracelet, the faithful companion of all my wanderings and vicissitudes.

Oh! how I longed to throw myself at her feet, and display her childish gift to her astonished eyes: but no, I was determined to preserve my incognito, for I felt that I was, in downright reality, taking the distemper again; and I was, therefore, prudently desirous of reconnoitering the enemy, before I made any further advance in the campaign.

Honoria now called her young cousins to the piano, and said with the sweetest smile in the world;—

"I hope Captain Benkinsop will pardon me if I give my young pupils a lesson while he finishes his repast."

Will it be believed that I had not at that moment self-possession enough to utter a word in reply to the dear soul, upon whom I was gazing with an intensity that bordered upon rudeness, and actually covered her sweet face with blushes. Indeed, I

began to fear that she already looked upon me as a sulky ill-mannered John Bull; and my confusion increased so rapidly, under this impression, that my worthy host and his lady started fifty different topics to relieve me from my embarrassment.

It was in vain, however: the days of my childhood came vividly upon my memory, and thoughts and feelings which had long lain dormant in my breast, checked and smothered by a long intercourse with a selfish and artificial world, now gushed forth upon the withered region of my heart, with all the freshness and vivacity of a spring in the desert. Silent and absorbed I sat, as if listening enchanted to a duet of Pleyel's, performed by the two young ladies, with great correctness and good taste, but nothing further.

"Honoria, dear," said Fitzgerald, when the duet was finished; "Captain Blenkinsop seems very fond of music: suppose you let him hear some of our Irish melodies—'Shawn O Dheer o'Glanna,' for instance, will be quite germane to the matter; being not only a national melody of great beauty in itself, but native to these very hills and streams that now surround us. You must know Captain Blenkinsop," he continned, "that 'Shawn O'Dheer O'Glanna,' signifies John O'Dwyer of the Glyn or Glen; for you are now in

the Glen of Aherlow, one of the richest valleys in the south of Ireland, in agricultural produce at least; and of this valley John O'Dwyer was one of the ancient worthies, whose name has been embalmed in song as you shall hear."

During this explanation of my host, altogether unnecessary, if he knew but all, Honoria had been tuning a handsome harp that stood by the piano; and touching its strings with a mastery that quite amazed me, she ran a prelude of wild and poetical fancy, that appropriately introduced the sweetly plaintive air of "John O'Dwyer of the Glyn;" accompanying the instrument with the Irish words, in a voice of touching pathos, pure melody, and highly cultivated taste.

To say that I was surprised, entranced, enraptured, is but faintly to express my feelings at that moment of exquisite enjoyment; seated by, and gazing upon the cherished companion of my boyhood, though to her an unknown and indifferent stranger. As every note of a melody, so familiar, and so dear, fell soothingly upon a heart so long indurated, as I thought, by its commerce with the world, but still so susceptible of the tenderest impressions, I felt the tears rolling down my cheeks in streams; and I preserved a breathless silence, fearful of losing a single grace or turn

of what was certainly an inspired version of that dear old strain: but still I had not the power of paying a single compliment to the accomplished artist on its termination.

"I perceive, Sir," said my worthy host, "that you have a soul for music, and have no doubt that you play upon some instrument yourself."

"I play a little," I replied carelessly, "upon the idler's instrument, the flute."

"Then, perhaps," said Fitzgerald, "you could favour us with something in your turn. George, bring your flute to Captain Blenkinsop."

George, a fine, ingenuous, bluff boy, immediately brought me an old one-keyed boxwood flute, upon which he was learning to play.

"I thank you, my dear George," I said, "but I am like the little boy who could only read in his own book. If, however, Miss Blake will honor me with an accompaniment, I have an instrument in one of my portmanteaus."

"With great pleasure," replied Honoria; her brilliant eyes sparkling as if she felt refreshed by hearing at length, and almost for the first time, the sound of my voice.

Having displayed my flute to the wondering eyes of George, who could never sufficiently admire its numerous keys, and faultless symmetry,

I played "John O'Dwyer of the Glyn," from memory, with a charming accompaniment, by Honoria; to which succeeded the "Coolun," "Savourna Dheelish," and many others of the Irish melodies.

It was now the turn of my hearers to express their surprise and admiration; which they did, with all that complimentary warmth so peculiarly Irish.

"What astonishes me above all," said my host, "is the perfectly national expression you give to our Irish airs. I could almost swear you were a native of these hills and valleys, and imbued with similar feelings to our own."

"I have been a good deal amongst the Irish abroad," I replied, carelessly, "and have picked up a great many of their ways and forms of thought and expression."

This satisfied the old people; but a shadow of gravity fell upon the speaking features of Honoria: then placing one of Mozart's masses on the reading desk of the piano, she said somewhat archly, and with a searching glance of her luminous eyes:

"I should not be surprised if you knew something about this, and can improvise an accompaniment."

Thus put upon my mettle, we played it together;

and Honoria sang the Latin words, to the great delight of our auditory, especially of Father Carrol; who expressed a hearty wish that he could command such music at his humble organ loft in the Glyn.

From Mozart we went to Beethoven and Weber, who has left one opera, at least, which is an incantation from beginning to end. We then ran through all the great masters of the Italian school with equal facility and success; and by the time supper was announced, my worthy host again congratulated me on my performance, saying at the same time to his sister-in-law:

"Honoria dear, you have at last got, I won't say a rival, or a competitor, but a fellow musician worthy of your own splendid talents."

At supper, however, Honoria was silent and reserved; while my spirits, on the contrary, ran riot, as it were, and I no longer seemed the sulky John Bull they must at first have taken me for. I chatted with the priest, on his own especial challenge, in French, Italian, and even Spanish, which he spoke a little: related anecdotes of the wars in Holland, Spain, and India; but particularly won Fitzgerald's heart by graphic descriptions of boar, tiger, and elephant hunting; with all the wonders of Oriental field sports, so strange

and captivating to the English ear. In short, before we separated for the night, he made me promise, "nothing loth," I can assure the reader, that I would spend a week with him at Glenville, as I did not appear to be pressed for time.

As may be well imagined, I did not sleep much on this eventful night; for, though my carriage-exercise had fatigued me a great deal more than if I had walked the whole way, yet the agitation of my mind, occasioned by an event so unexpected, and, indeed, so marvellous, kept me for a long time tossing about in restless anxiety. I had, however, a few hours' sleep, before a brilliant sun, and the music of a thousand birds, recalled me to another day in my chequered existence.

The morning was warm and genial; and, throwing up the window-sash, I sat down to enjoy a view, at once the most splendid and interesting to my feelings that I had ever gazed upon.

There it lay before me, as on a map, the lovely Glen of Aherlow; through whose verdant fields I had so often strayed in careless childhood, when visions of life filled my youthful mind, very different, indeed, from the stern reality I had since experienced. There it lay, in full view, from the commanding position I occupied; the silvery Suir winding its fruitful course through fields of green

meadow, or yellow harvest; hiding, at times, its pure stream in some hoary wood, or young plantation; and, anon, appearing beyond, till it finally mingled with the light fleecy clouds that fringed the horizon: while the Galties, on the one hand, and Slieve-na-muck, on the other, reared their cloud-capped heads, proud guardians of the secluded Eden that lay between them.

Throughout this fertile vale, cottages, hamlets, and farm-yards were sprinkled; and Father Carrol's modest church arose in decent pride, its belfry resounding with the summons to early prayers. These symptoms of rural life and industry extended considerably up the mountain, on whose rugged side was perched the residence of my new friend; his gardens lying in terraces before me on the downward slope, filled with all the riches of floral and horticultural produce. In the centre of the flower-garden, which lay nearest to the lawn, there was a pretty fountain, supplied from a small cascade that tumbled down the lofty rocks in rear of the dwelling-house; and beside the granite basin that received the waters of the jet, stood my dear little Honoria feeding the gold and silver fishes.

Strange that even still I continued to look upon her simply as my infant playfellow, and thought

it odd that she did not, as before, spring to my embrace, twine her little arms round my neck, and cover my cheek with kisses. But when I looked at the full and perfect form which now stood before me, I felt that a new phase of existence had opened upon us both; and that our future weal or woe entirely depended on the impression we should now mutually make upon each other.

When she had finished the first act of duty, Honoria skipped off to her flower-beds; with skilful hands tending and directing their luxuriant growth, and selecting from all a bouquet to adorn the breakfast-table. But, in all she did, in every act and movement there was such healthful agility and feminine grace, that I could not for an instant withdraw my eyes from her elegant and elastic figure; but sat rapt, as it were, with love and admiration, when a voice from the lawn under my window called out:

"Hillo! Captain; are you enjoying the fresco?"

It was my worthy host, and his son George, both equipped as anglers; with rods over their shoulders, and baskets by their sides, apparently well stocked with the finny prey.

"What, have you been down to the river already?" I demanded.

"Yes," he replied; "George and I have been

killing a few trout, in spite of the bright sunshine, that you may judge for yourself of the produce of our Irish streams. But dress and come down; breakfast will soon be ready, and I warrant it, you'll enjoy them hot from the gridiron."

I cast one more glance at the garden, but Honoria had vanished at the sound of our voices: having nothing further to detain me, I descended to the parlour, where the breakfast-table was already laden with every requisite for a hearty and luxurious meal; a bouquet of the most lovely flowers adorning the centre, and casting a rich fragrance round the room.

There was no one present, as yet, but my host's two young daughters; who were seated at a table near the window, drawing some flowers from nature. I complimented them on their occupation, especially when they told me they were solely taught by their aunt Honoria; who, by the possession of this delightful art, thus added another link of steel to my already enslaved and captive heart.

Upon the table lay a large, handsome portfolio, well stocked with masterly sketches of foreign scenery and costume, the work of my dear little talented cousin. Having, with permission from the young ladies, looked them over, I was about

to close the book, when a slip of paper fell from one of its pockets, upon which several attempts had been made, in colours, and with various success, to recall the features of a countenance which I fondly imagined was my own. Indeed, this was put beyond a doubt, by the words, "Poor Percy!" being written underneath.

This little memento of enduring affection I made no scruple of purloining; and I had scarcely concealed it in my pocket-book, when the company entered to breakfast.

It is needless to say that this happy week flew like lightning; every day, however spent, being closed with delicious music and social chat. The first, my host and I shot over the Knight of Glynn's preserves; the second, we followed the hounds of a neighbouring club; the third, we enjoyed the splendid trout-fishing of the river Suir; the fourth, we had a riding-party, in which Honoria was, as usual, pre-eminent: the fifth, we had a pic-nic at the Devil's Punch-Bowl, on the topmost summit of the Galties; the sixth, being rainy, we played billiards at Lord Massy's seat, in the Glen; and on Sunday, the seventh, we attended Father Carrol's neat little chapel, where, again, I accompanied Honoria with my flute; as, to the delight of the assembled rustics, she drew

from a sweet little organ, peal upon peal of that celestial harmony which should never be divorced from religious rites; as softening the asperities of the world, attuning the affections of the heart, and elevating the soul to the purest and holiest contemplation of the Deity.

A second and a third week still found me at Glenville, utterly regardless of the great world in which I had yet a part to play; and living as if life had no other duty, occupation, or pleasure, than riding, dancing, walking, talking to, and playing the flute with Honoria. We were, in fact, all in all to each other: for though, at times, a strange mysterious shadow would rest upon her expressive features, as if she was suffering a pang of self-reproach; and her thoughtful eye would dwell upon mine, as though her eager spirit was endeavouring to retrace some vision of past joy; yet, having given up, with a sigh, the vain attempt, she would return my caresses with all the bewitching frankness, and confiding simplicity of a devoted and affectionate heart.

But time and space both hint that I must not linger over this closing scene of my strange eventful history.

One evening, in our little family circle, we were chatting over the varied manners of the foreign

countries I had visited; and, amongst other pecu liarities, I related to my friends the chivalrous custom of the Rajpoot ladies, in securing the services of a champion, by presenting him with a bracelet, which constitutes him the *Rakhi-bund-Bâe*, or bracelet-bound brother of the fair. I also displayed to their admiring gaze, the valuable bracelet I had received from the Princess of Ruttunpoor; and related the adventure connected therewith. I concluded, by requesting, with an appropriate compliment, Honoria's acceptance of the splendid jewel; but her eyes filled with tears, her features were again overcast by the mysterious shadow, and, with somewhat formal politeness, she declined the present.

"Why, Honoria, dear," said Fitzgerald, "this reminds you of your *gage-d'amour* to Percy Blake."

"Edward, Edward!" cried Mrs. Fitzgerald, "how can you be so inconsiderate? The *gage-d'amour*, Captain Blenkinsop, mentioned by my husband, was nothing more than a hair bracelet, presented by a child of six years old, to her cousin, when he entered the army."

"Of course it was," returned Fitzgerald, "and I was wrong to call it a *gage-d'amour*. It was nothing but a childish gift, and has doubtless been long since lost and forgotten by the recipient."

"Perhaps not," I said. "Perhaps you do poor Percy Blake an injustice in saying so."

"Perhaps I do," replied Fitzgerald, "and, if so, I'm sorry for it; for, after all, he was a fine fellow, and an honor to the sod, having greatly distinguished himself, as I am told, in the Peninsula and India. But it is so long since we have heard anything of him direct from himself, that he has doubtless forgotten his friends and relatives in this part of the world."

"Would Honoria," I demanded, "like to see her *gage-d'amour* once more?"

"Oh heavens!" she exclaimed, gasping for breath, "What do you—what can you possibly mean?"

"Behold, my Honoria!" I cried, kneeling before her, and baring my wrist, "Behold your *gage-d'amour* just as you yourself placed it thirteen years ago, on the wrist of your own, own, faithful Percy Blake."

With a scream of wonder and delight, the dear girl threw her arms round my neck, and hid her tears and blushes in my breast; while Fitzgerald danced about the room like a madman, shouting at the extent of his lungs:

"Huzza, huzza! I thought there was Irish blood in his veins!"

In another fortnight, Honoria and I were married by Father Caroll, in the little temple at the glen; and a long course of domestic felicity has amply proved the truth of the proverb—

> "Happy is the wooing,
> That is not long a-doing!"

The ceremony was performed in the presence of all our assembled friends and relatives; Honoria's delighted mother exclaiming, as she presented me with the hand of my beautiful bride:

"My dear child, I hope you will never again have occasion to say, as you have so often done, 'Oh, what shall I do for my cousin Percy?'"

Gentle readers, and kind friends, who have thus far accompanied me in my unpretending narrative, I now bid you heartily farewell; having nothing further to communicate, beyond the ordinary routine of military life, in these "piping times;" when the crafty cunning of John Doe and Richard Roe has succeeded the open daring of the foe in the field, and the prisoner of peace is treated more scurvily than the prisoner of war.

Having outlived many of my contemporaries, and being thus isolated, as it were, with respect to feeling and reminiscence in the new military world that is springing up around me, I have with the assistance

of my generous Rajpoot, and my Deccan and Pindarrie prize-money, lodged "the needful," for an unattached majority; and purpose, as soon as I am gazetted, to retire to my paternal acres: there, if possible, to gather around me a few of my cherished companions of field and forest; and, amidst the blessings of love and friendship, to sink, with patient submission to the Divine will, into that universal decay of matter which precedes the spiritual life to come.

THE END.

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